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# PACIFIC STUDIES

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A multidisciplinary journal devoted to the study  
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# PACIFIC STUDIES

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## LOGGING LABOR ON VANIKORO, SOLOMON ISLANDS: THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF "THE MOST FEEBLE IN THE COMMERCIAL WORLD," 1923–1964

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Logging commenced in 1923 on Vanikoro in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate and ceased almost forty years later. The Vanikoro Kauri Timber Company employed Melanesians and workers of European descent, the latter mainly from New Zealand and, increasingly, Australia. These men worked closely together in an industry involving heavy manual work, a very unusual situation in the protectorate. There is some evidence that before World War II the European workers supported Melanesian attempts to obtain better conditions. Management, by and large, tried to prevent worker solidarity across the race divide, but tolerated interaction if the job got done. Likewise, the company tried to recruit Melanesians from Malaita as well as the Santa Cruz District partly because Malaitans were good workers and partly to weaken local district solidarity. Before World War II mortality rates were high among the indentured Melanesians, as were resignations due to ill-health among the Europeans. After the war health improved, but industrial problems continued with the Melanesians making the most of new opportunities to strike, which had been illegal under the old indenture system. Their increasing skills, alternative opportunities for paid employment, and the demands of timber processors overseas gave them considerable clout in labor-management relations, enabling them to extract better wages and conditions.

LABOR HISTORY in the precolonial and colonial Pacific Islands reveals a preoccupation with plantation workers and, to a lesser extent, mine workers.<sup>1</sup> Laborers in the early timber and logging industry have received some attention, notably in Dorothy Shineberg's classic *They Came for Sandalwood*. No study of labor in this industry in the colonial Pacific Islands exists; indeed, it is a neglected area in the pantropics. This article seeks to open the discourse, examining the parameters of labor-management relations, methods

by which workers contested the workplace, and the factors influencing the alliances of labor across the spectrum of race and island identity in the case of Vanikoro.

### From Australia and New Zealand

With European colonization in Australia and New Zealand the forests were cleared for settlement and to provide building timber. New Zealand kauri (*Agathis australis*) found a market at home and in Australia. In 1888 a group of Melbourne businessmen formed the Kauri Timber Company to carry on logging in New Zealand.<sup>2</sup> By 1910 the days of an unlimited kauri supply were over. The company sought an alternative source. Through Melbourne business connections it bought into a coconut-planting company, Fairley, Rigby and Company (after 1916 called the San Cristoval Estates) that had a provisional lease in 1913 to cut kauri (*Agathis macrophylla*) and other timbers on Vanikoro, in the Santa Cruz group of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. The concession was not taken up until 1923, due to World War I and competing claims.<sup>3</sup>

Given the background of the new subsidiary, the Vanikoro Kauri Timber Company, it is no surprise that the first "bushmen" employed came mainly from New Zealand, where they had experience in kauri felling. These men, both of European and Maori descent, were strong, resourceful workers, inured to tough conditions and isolation in the bush camps. Their working week had been fifty-eight hours in New Zealand. Non-unionized labor, they, in the workplace, lived by a code that included sobriety, no gambling for money, teamwork, and mutual help for the sick and injured. Their world was very much a male one and few had wives with them in the camps. When payday came, they often "blew their cheque" on drink and the pleasures of the milling towns, then sobered up and returned to the bush to work another stint.<sup>4</sup>

The first party of fifteen destined for Vanikoro in late 1923 fitted this pattern. Their background was in logging and milling and two were Maori. Unlike the average European in the Solomons, they came expecting to do heavy manual work and not to make the islands their home. Except for the seventy-five-year-old medical doctor, they were in their twenties and thirties and in good health as they sailed from Tulagi for Vanikoro.<sup>5</sup>

Four hundred miles from the colonial capital of Tulagi, reef-fringed Vanikoro rose to a height of over three thousand feet. Its shoreline mangrove-covered, the island of seventy-two square miles had almost no flat land, the kauri growing along the rugged ridges inland. Before the logging company came, the last European inhabitants had been from the two ships of La



Pérouse, which had been wrecked in a 1788 storm on the reefs off Paeu on the south coast. They did not last long; sickness and the local people finished the few survivors.<sup>6</sup>

In 1923 Vanikoro and adjacent Tevai (Te Anu) had changed little since Dillon in 1827 and Dumont D'Urville in 1828 came looking for relics of the French, except that the population had dropped from about fifteen hundred to eighty-three.<sup>7</sup> The colonial labor trade had brushed lightly over the Santa Cruz District, with some men and a few women kidnaped or volunteering for Queensland, Fiji, the New Hebrides, and New Caledonia until the early 1900s.<sup>8</sup> Mission contact was just as light but more congenial—though not for Bishop J. C. Patteson and his companions of the Melanesian Mission (Anglican), who died in 1871 at the hands of the people of Nukapu, Reef Islands. Adding to the fearsome reputation of this district, the Santa Cruz people had killed a British naval commander in 1875. Following the extension of the protectorate in 1898, visits by officials were rare and concentrated mainly on Vanikoro.<sup>9</sup>

The bushmen from New Zealand knew little of the French and nothing of the terrible epidemics that had swept Vanikoro as late as 1915.<sup>10</sup> Closer to their own concerns, the New Zealanders did not know that in 1913 a party of Australians, bushmen like themselves, had been employed by Lever's Pacific Plantations to clear its land at Kolombangara and had lasted only four weeks.<sup>11</sup> Vanikoro was one of the wettest parts of the Solomons with an annual rainfall of about 250 inches, which fell daily for two-thirds of the year. The temperature was about 32 degrees centigrade by day and 22 by night. This hot, humid island was full of anopheles mosquitoes, full of malaria.<sup>12</sup>

### Melanesians: Negotiating the Workplace

The forty Melanesians who came with this first group of bushmen, and their successors, faced the same difficult environment, although having survived infancy in a malarial climate they had a certain immunity to the disease. In this pioneering phase the company took the advice of experienced "Island hands," and so hired Malaitans. Malaita had been the major supplier of labor to Queensland and Fiji in the pre-protectorate days and filled the same role within the Solomons following the advent of the British administration in 1896. Malaitans were recruited for Vanikoro initially through the Tulagi-based merchants and shippers W. R. Carpenter, but mainly by trader-recruiters based in the Santa Cruz District, Fred Jones in the *Quand Meme* and, until their deaths in 1932, the partners Charles Cowan and Norman Sarich in the *Navanora*.<sup>13</sup> These recruiters also canvassed the district, with

most local recruits coming from Santa Cruz island (Ndenö) and the Reef Islands, and a few from the small populations on Utupua and the Duffs. Most managers preferred Malaitans<sup>14</sup> because they were “far superior to the local labour for work in the kauri.”<sup>15</sup> However, a disadvantage was the expense involved. To transport, Malaitans each cost about £6 to £8 more than Santa Cruz District recruits because of the greater distance to and from Vanikoro, a cost the company had to meet under the regulations for indentured labor. The company thus had to compromise between economy and efficiency. So most managers chose “mixed labour” for “best results and harmony” and to discourage the possibility of any concerted resistance.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1920s the company complained of a shortage of local labor,<sup>17</sup> a complaint shared with the dominant commercial enterprise in the protectorate—copra plantations. Planters as early as 1910 had urged the British, as the company did, to import “coolies” to solve the problem, but without success.<sup>18</sup>

Since the minimum wage for Islanders was £12 a year (20s. a month) for the two-year indenture period, the obvious solution was to offer a higher wage. But the company faced opposition from recruiters whose major customers were the big planting companies such as Lever’s Pacific Plantations and the subsidiaries of Burns, Philp and Company. Burns Philp, along with W. R. Carpenter, also had extensive wholesale, retail, and shipping interests in the group. Prior to 1924, when the legal minimum wage had been £6 a year (10s. a month), Solomon Islanders, knowing they were in demand, had forced up the real wage by demanding of recruiters, and thus employers, bigger “beach payments” in trade goods that mainly went to the recruit’s relatives. The payment steadily increased in value from £6 in 1911 to £20 in 1920: the cost to the planters of a finite labor supply. As a consequence of the planters’ protests, in April 1924 the beach payment, by law, became a fixed cash advance of £6, but as a trade-off the government increased the minimum wage to £24 for two years. The big companies were relieved to be rid of real wage competition. If recruiters on the Vanikoro Kauri Timber Company’s behalf were to offer a higher wage they “would very quickly find the screws being put on them by the big firms” and so would the company because Burns Philp and Carpenter’s controlled the steamers that serviced Vanikoro. Likewise, if the company offered better wages and used a recruiting vessel of its own, competing recruiters would “make it their business to warn the natives against Vanikoro.”<sup>19</sup>

An alternative was to offer bonuses for experience or to employ for a shorter term, as well as giving an extra meat ration to the bush workers. In 1928 those on the standard two-year indenture received the minimum wage, but got an added 5s. a month after six months’ service and 10s. after a year’s service. Experienced Santa Cruz District men received between 25 and 35s.

a month for a year's contract, a term preferred by most labor, which was easy to administer as the district office was adjacent to the company's base at Paeu. Company strategy was to encourage the return of experienced men and to save on transportation expenses by drawing most labor from the local district.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, this was less likely to antagonize recruiters from elsewhere in the Solomons, since few went as far east because of costs. This suited the men of the Santa Cruz District because, like most Melanesians, they preferred to work close to home. With the better wage, from 1929 at least until the end of World War II practically all chose work at Vanikoro rather than on plantations far beyond their district.<sup>21</sup>

Protectorate-wide, Melanesians already had a considerable input into the context of labor, the spiraling beach payment being one example.<sup>22</sup> Vanikoro provided another example as laborers soon learned that the work was more demanding than on plantations. One contract period was all it took for the word to spread from the first returners and for Malaitans to demand 30s. a month for logging work in 1927, so the company's wage policy of 1928 was not generous. The company also had to accommodate Melanesian cultural patterns. In 1926 laborers refused to have their fingerprints taken in token of signature, probably because anything personal to the individual could be bespelled by sorcerers.<sup>23</sup> The company also found that it was no use trying to recruit on Malaita until November, after the "dancing season"<sup>24</sup> associated with the harvest of canarium almonds.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, when the company wanted big, strong recruits it was obliged to accommodate the Melanesian collective orientation and accept "small" kinsmen as well, or the entire group from a particular area would refuse to sign on.<sup>26</sup>

Small, as well as inexperienced, laborers had caused problems for the company in the early years, a situation partly responsible for the company's drive to recruit experienced men. Most early recruits from Santa Cruz knew no Pijin, the Melanesian lingua franca, so teaching them new skills was hard.<sup>27</sup> The men's ignorance appalled early managers: "This class of labour could be described as the most feeble in the commercial world. It is also more expensive than appears at first sight, owing chiefly to the unremitting supervision that is necessary, even for the most simple jobs—no native can be left to do anything by himself even for an hour, to hustle him in his work is to bring about his complete collapse."<sup>28</sup>

Strange tasks and tools had to be mastered. As subsistence horticulturists, the Melanesians were proficient at clearing paths, carrying timber, cutting trees and firewood, weeding and cooking—appropriate skills for working on copra plantations and for basic tasks in a logging operation. They understood and could use levers to move logs and skids.<sup>29</sup> However, "they are not easy to learn [*sic*] to use a hand saw or drive a nail, they are only good for the



lifting and jacking part of carpentering.”<sup>30</sup> Earth work was foreign as was the use of a shovel—not an easy tool for anyone in bare feet. “If left alone awhile they get back to the pointed stick for loosening the earth and their hands for removing.” The men were just as awkward with picks. However, with small work teams and alternative approaches the men did learn. The company modified the edge of the shovels so that a flat place was made for the men’s feet to push against.<sup>31</sup> They learned to use the crosscut saw and work with the timber-jack.<sup>32</sup> Progress was slow in these early years, as most laborers took a year to become semiskilled.<sup>33</sup>

### **Melanesian and European Relations**

Running at a loss, the company tried to remedy matters by disposing of native labor, the reverse of the pattern of local substitution for expensive white workers that several mining companies aimed for in the 1930s and 1940s elsewhere in the western Pacific.<sup>34</sup> Yet Lever’s had warned that white men could not do hard labor in the tropics.<sup>35</sup> This proved no convenient European myth: by 1929 the company could see that most white men, no matter their initial good health, had a short working life on Vanikoro, where they quickly succumbed to malaria and other illnesses to which they had not been exposed before. Many lasted only eight or nine months, instead of two years, and this pattern continued beyond World War II. Such attrition and lack of continuity in personnel added considerably to the company’s costs. Management was forced to rely on local labor more than it had intended.<sup>36</sup> Skilled Melanesians were scarce. The Bougainvillean Mac Savoit, or “Black Mac,” one of the original recruits, learned to drive the steam hauler that pulled the logs “as well as any white man”<sup>37</sup> and, with a wage of £48 a year in 1932, he was “one of the highest paid natives” in the islands.

Savoit had expressed a desire in 1926 to learn to read and write; so the manager, M. Court, took him to Australia for a few years’ schooling.<sup>38</sup> But few Solomon Islanders had basic literacy or technical education, so for decades men like Black Mac remained a rarity.

Training for Melanesians was “hands-on” and practical. On Vanikoro they found themselves working beside Europeans rather than simply being instructed by them. Although pioneer white planters had got among their labor to show them the simple tasks involved in copra production, they soon stepped back and managed their workers, leaving it to “boss boys.”<sup>39</sup> This social distance increased away from the workplace, as interaction for accommodation, sport, recreation, and the like was rarely across racial lines within plantation society.<sup>40</sup> The Vanikoro situation was unique, for when the company began its operations, no one had ever heard of whites “being employed



in other than in management positions. There was no white labour at present employed in the group."<sup>41</sup>

The overseas staff, excluding Asians, was at its maximum strength of twenty-seven in 1927, when the company ran a mill at Paeu as well as logging. Eleven worked in the bush. Of the 70 Solomon Islanders employed early in 1928, 31 were in the bush gangs, but this increased when a full complement of 160 were hired later in the year (Table 1).<sup>42</sup>

On Vanikoro this blurring of the labor-management divide, demarcated on racial lines in the rest of the Solomons, had interesting social consequences. The conventional wisdom was that it was unacceptable to have natives ("boys") and whites ("men") doing the same kind of work. Doing so would mean a loss of prestige for the whites.<sup>43</sup> The occasional European at Vanikoro who had worked as a tradesman elsewhere in the colonial Pacific also had firm notions about what work was beneath the dignity of the white man.<sup>44</sup> However, most of the New Zealand bushmen who came to Vanikoro in the 1920s and 1930s did not seem to hold this attitude, nor on isolated Vanikoro were they long enough in the society of other colonial whites to have absorbed it. Some expressed dismay at the way, in the Solomons, the white man's "burden had been shouldered by the black boys."<sup>45</sup>

Among the men of both races in the bush gangs, a camaraderie developed. For several weeks at a time these men lived in shacks in the bush in close proximity, as they logged an area. When they returned periodically to headquarters at Paeu where they played football together and had similar accommodation, these friendly relations persisted, but not without comment.<sup>46</sup> In 1926 the doctor, Charles Deland, was upset about the unsanitary conditions at Vanikoro, reflected in the high incidence of sickness. Contact by Europeans with Melanesians contributed to the malaria problem because the latter were all infected. Although this was true, there was ample opportunity for the mosquito vector to sting both Melanesian and European at work anyway, so separation in leisure time seemed a little precious. The doctor was concerned too about the spread of ringworm and scabies (*Sarcoptes scabiei*) among the Europeans and deplored the fact that "a number of the men are unduly familiar with the boys and are given to fondling them and wearing armlets, etc. they have worn. Also the boys are allowed to come into the men's quarters and sit on beds, etc. I have already spoken of the danger of this in regard to the spread of malaria and dysentery."<sup>47</sup>

This level of intimacy between the races was rare in the Solomon Islands.<sup>48</sup> Where it occurred, such white men were considered to have "gone native," lowering the dignity of the white race. The district officer at Paeu, A. Middenway, saw it very much in these terms: "the familiarity is to be regretted as its effect is evident in the casual manner of the natives." The manager,

TABLE 1. Numbers and Origins of Vanikoro Employees

Year	Total Solomon Islands	Malaita	Santa Cruz District <sup>a</sup>	New Zealand- Australia	Others	Indentured from Santa Cruz for all BSIP <sup>b</sup>
1923-1924	40	40		15	1 Bougainvillean	184 <sup>c</sup>
1925	50	40	10	7		91
1926	21	20		21	4 Japanese	223
1927	72			27	1 Chinese	171
1928	160	28+		26	3 Chinese	120
1929	164	40		24+		116
1930	100	70	30	20		71
1931	77	50	27	3		23
1932	31-45	15	16	5		41
1933	64	27	37		1 Chinese	26
1934	111	23		9		62
1935	127					23
1936	82	32				38
1937	80				1 Chinese	57
1938	120			12		41
1939	160	22	98+			23
1940	115					85
1941	120					?
1942	23	23		12		?
1944	20	0	20			
1950	100	0		22		
1951			85	20		
1952	100				6 Fijians	
1953						
1954	130					
1956	150			15		
1958	150					

1959	150	
1961	110	11
1962		8
1963	134	6

*Sources:* VR: de Bondy to Secy., 17 Apr. 1926, Gov. depts. to and from; Secy. to Secy. of Gov., 7 Aug. 1929, Gov. depts. to and from; de Bondy to Secy., 31 Dec. 1925; Court to Chairman, n.d. 1926; Report, Vanikoro, 9 Apr. 1931; Manager to Secy., 16 Feb. 1928; Smith to Secy., 16 Feb. 1928; Butler, Report re. Vanikoro, Aug. 1926; Curtis, Report, June(?) 1928, Corres. 1925–1931; Director's Minute Book, 27 Jan. 1931; Dawe to Secy., 27 Dec. 1932, Corres. 1932–1936; Secy. to Woy Sang Tuen Co., 5 May 1933, Employees' Corres. 1932–1953; McEwin to Secy., 31 July 1951; McEwin to Secy., 8 Jan. 1953, Corres. to and from 1949–1960; Kerr Bros. to Secy., 2 Feb. 1950, Corres. 1949–1950; Filewood to Secy., Dec. 1956; Report, Vanikoro, 23 Apr. 1959, Reports Monthly and General 1949–1963; Rogers, Report, Vanikoro, Sept. 1961; Wilber Saxton, Report, 21 Nov. 1963, Reports; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1930–1944; BSIP 9/V/5: RC(?), Inspection Notes, Vanikoro, 1929; Diary, Santa Cruz, 1934; BSIP 9/III/3: Quarterly Reports 1929–1937; WPHC 2894/27: ARSC 1926; WPHC 1422/29: ARSC 1928; WPHC 1290/30: ARSC 1929; BSIP 9/I: ARSC Tour Report, Dec. 1950; ARED 1954; WPHC 1121/24: ARLD 1923; WPHC 1197/25: ARLD 1924; WPHC 1170/26: ARLD 1925; WPHC 1510/27: ARLD 1926; WPHC 1835/28: ARLD 1927; WPHC 1426/29: ARLD 1928; WPHC 809/30: ARLD 1929; WPHC 755/31: ARLD 1930; WPHC 1228/32: ARLD 1931; WPHC 506/33: ARLD 1932; WPHC 920/34: ARLD 1933; WPHC 1612/35: ARLD 1934; WPHC 1598/36: ARLD 1935; WPHC 2744/37: ARLD 1936; WPHC 1638/38: ARLD 1937; WPHC 2469/40: ARLD 1939; WPHC 2399/41: ARLD 1940.

<sup>a</sup> Some discrepancies occur between sources, apparently owing to the timing of returns to different government officials, such as the district officer at Vanikoro and the labor inspector based at Tulagi. Several workers at Vanikoro were on short contracts for less than two years and this will have skewed returns as well. Partly because of this, there has been no attempt to estimate the workers from the Santa Cruz District employed by the company by subtracting those known to be from Malaita from the Solomon Islands total. Only actual numbers recorded are cited.

<sup>b</sup> May include those just beginning a contract period and those in their second year.

<sup>c</sup> Averaged for 1923 and 1924.

Captain C. Curtis, as new to logging in 1927 as he was to Melanesia,<sup>49</sup> was more interested in the workers' output than colonial conventions, when he told his superiors that "I am aware the bushgangs are on most friendly terms with each other, which makes for willing work, which with these natives is the only way to get the job done, treated otherwise they become sullen and take to loafing."<sup>50</sup> Other managers, though, had misgivings.<sup>51</sup> Malcolm Smith, a year later, urged the Melbourne office not to employ any more Maori despite the fact that they were exceptionally good bushmen because "it is inadvisable to have them handling native labour."<sup>52</sup> Whether this was because the Maori might identify with the Solomon Islander or because the Islander might aspire to the social and economic status that the Maori bushman shared with his European counterpart on Vanikoro was not stated. Certainly Maori were employed subsequently and liked by the Melanesians.<sup>53</sup>

It was difficult for management to hold a united front based on race when the bulk of the Europeans were themselves wage labor. Vanikoro was the least salubrious place of work for Europeans in the islands.<sup>54</sup> Although they did not complain about what the resident commissioner considered "disgraceful" living conditions, several turned to alcohol for solace and this caused some absenteeism. It was at Vanikoro that the first strike by European labor in the protectorate occurred, triggered in July 1929 by a wage reduction. The new manager, trying to reduce absenteeism, altered the pay structure from a contracted monthly rate of £30 to an hourly rate of 2s. 9d. for a forty-eight-hour week, on a no-work/no-pay basis, except for a minimum payment of 10s. a day for certified illness. This meant at least a loss of almost £4 a month, without illness. The men refused to work. Although the district officer and indeed the resident commissioner were sympathetic, they intervened to prevent violence in the small, divided community, taking away the two leaders on the government vessel.<sup>55</sup> How Solomon Islanders perceived this strike is unknown; certainly the government's action would have been seen as a predictable sanction since its supervision of the indenture system created the impression it was instrumental in determining the relations between employer and employee, indentured or not.<sup>56</sup>

### Working through Depression

By 1930 the worldwide Depression had hit the protectorate's plantation-based economy. As timber sales in Australia fell, duty on imported logs tripled in June 1930.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, the company abandoned its bonus system for Melanesians, reverting to a minimum monthly wage of £1 and stopping the extra meat rations. Wages and salaries at all levels were cut among the Europeans on Vanikoro and in the Melbourne parent firm. The following year it



reduced staffing levels at Vanikoro and production fell by over a third in 1932–1933. The number of European workers dropped from twenty to three. Although the number of Melanesians was also reduced, the full effect of this was not evident until 1932 when most two-year contracts finished, leaving only thirty to forty-five laborers (Table 1).<sup>58</sup> Attracting Malaitan labor proved difficult. Experienced men demanded double the minimum wage of a pound a month, which the company found “out of the question.”<sup>59</sup> Some relief came in early 1933 when the protectorate was granted Empire preferential tariff status by Australia, reducing the duty on logs by a third, and the market revived.<sup>60</sup>

There was no relief for Solomon Islanders, however. The protectorate reduced the minimum wage for native workers by half in 1934 in response to planter pressure as copra prices continued to plummet.<sup>61</sup> Several of the “pro-native” European workers sympathized with the Melanesians, much to management’s annoyance.<sup>62</sup> Fewer Melanesians offered to work, but then planters could not afford to hire many. Malaitans also refused to recruit for Vanikoro until the need to pay a head tax forced some to.<sup>63</sup>

Survival, rather than wages, dominated the minds of Melanesian laborers on Vanikoro between 1934 and 1936 and precipitated their first walkout. Murmurs of problems came to the district officer in May 1934. There was tension between the Santa Cruz and Malaita men at the bush camp in the Kombe area. Unlike plantation practice, these two groups had been housed together. The Santa Cruz men, who outnumbered the Malaitans, suspected the Malaitans of sorcery. Each group wanted separate accommodation. The manager, Dawe, appears to have settled this until a series of deaths took place at the other bush camp, farther east at Saboe. One after another six men died during August: the doctor, Kelly, attributed four of the deaths to subtertian malaria, one to pleurisy and pneumonia, and one to an internal hemorrhage. These causes were not the way the Melanesians perceived them, believing malign spiritual forces to be at work or, in the vague Pijin term, a “devil-devil.” Even before the last death the men fled to Paeu. They also deserted the camp at Kombe because the company buried five of the dead only five hundred yards from their quarters; the Santa Cruz men there were afraid of the ghosts. The district officer got these men back to work, but the next day he had fifty Malaitans on his doorstep. Again he tried persuasion, but thirteen completely refused to return to the bush. As they were under indenture and its attendant penal clauses, the district officer prosecuted and fined them for failing to obey a lawful order of their employer, but he could not get them back to the bush so the company was forced to find them work at Paeu.

An inquiry disclosed no abuse of the regulations, but the district officer

ordered the company to have the doctor based in the future at Saboe camp, not ten miles away at Paeu.<sup>64</sup> The year's total of eight deaths in a local labor force of 111 constituted more than a third of all deaths among indentured labor in the protectorate. The mortality rate of 5.4 percent, almost nine times the protectorate average for 1934, was a frightening statistic.<sup>65</sup> The company soon replaced Dr. Kelly as he was showing signs of paranoia and physical deterioration that were to lead to his hospitalization in Australia, one of several such cases over the years among Vanikoro's Europeans.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps the Solomon Islanders had been right about the ghosts after all.

Disease—or, in Melanesian eyes, malign spiritual forces—and possible neglect had brought protests from labor. Another environmental factor precipitated more. Early British administrators, focusing on investment possibilities, liked to believe the Solomons was outside the hurricane belt.<sup>67</sup> Nothing could be further from reality, as the company discovered on 10 December 1935 when a great cyclone hit. Earlier, to avoid the mosquitoes and sandflies, the company had built some of the quarters for their Europeans on a pier over the sea. The cyclone carried away these and those along the shore at Paeu, except for the manager's substantial house on the east bank of the Lawrence River. As for Vanikoro, the district officer recorded it "looks as if it had been fired, trees are just brown sticks and leafless." At Utupua, thirty miles distant, the island was "completely destroyed" and looked like "a newly ploughed field."<sup>68</sup>

In this desolation were new recruits, including thirty-two from Malaita who were among the first to recruit since the partial boycott of employers following the protectorate wage cut of late 1934. Most were assigned to the Sunde River camp, inland to the northwest of Paeu. By late June 1936, eleven were dead, including seven Malaitans from east 'Are'are, two from Santa Cruz, and one from the Reefs.<sup>69</sup> Ten had died of beriberi, a vitamin B<sub>1</sub> (thiamine) deficiency disease. The company had given the workers the stipulated rations, the carbohydrate component being polished rice, normally with some thiamine content. Workers often supplemented their rations by fishing, foraging, and hunting wild pigs. However, if their bellies were full, the laborers sometimes neglected the subtleties of dietary balance.<sup>70</sup> The cyclone had destroyed most of the vegetation and the camp was miles from any village. The Santa Cruz men seem to have been able to exploit the sparse environment more successfully than the Malaitans: the latter, for example, would not have found the wild possum, endemic to the western and central Solomons. The Santa Cruz men possibly obtained more fresh food from the Vanikoro people, more akin to them than to the Malaitans. Dr. C. Courtney believed the Malaitans did not cook their rice enough, leaving it indigestible. However, an inquiry by the government doctor

revealed that the rice was old and had been poorly stored for several months; being full of weevils and rat droppings, it had to be washed thoroughly before cooking. This and its age meant the vitamin B content was lost. Full of malaria himself, Courtney, doctor and acting manager, had diagnosed the first cases in May, following an epidemic of dysentery due to appalling sanitation, as well as influenza with pneumonia, along with the perennial malaria and blackwater fever, which had afflicted the weakened Europeans and Melanesians. After seven of their number died in three days, the Malaitans, supported by a European employee named Ken Whitford, went to the district officer and asked to cancel their contracts.

Although the indenture system was a powerful instrument for worker compliance, the government saw that driving labor to death was both counter-productive and inhumane. So the resident commissioner in Tulagi approved the cancellations while the district officer managed to secure four hundred pounds of vegetables from Buna village on Tevai to supplement the men's diet until he was able to get them on a ship to Malaita. With such a horrendous death rate the government refused to allow the company to resume recruiting until it provided more balanced and fresher rations in August, but the total deaths for that terrible year were fifteen out of eighty-two workers, a mortality rate of 18.29 percent, almost fifteen times the protectorate average and more than a third of all indentured labor deaths.<sup>71</sup>

Diet was always a problem at Vanikoro because of poor shipping, isolation, and the lack of a reliable local source. The regulation food for Melanesians was not nearly satisfactory until 1938–1939 when the meat ration was increased and the rice changed to semi-unpolished.<sup>72</sup> Although several infectious diseases knew no racial boundaries, Europeans escaped beriberi because they usually had some vegetables from their garden at Paeu, got all the catch from men the company sent out to fish, and could buy additional provisions from the company store as well. Of course, the comparatively low-paid Melanesians could also buy at the store to supplement their rations, but only at double the markup charged Europeans, or, in the mid-1950s, three times this<sup>73</sup>—a standard practice throughout the Solomons as a way to “get back some of the native money we pay out.”<sup>74</sup> Additionally, in order to prevent debt servitude, and so alienate the laborers' families and thus inhibit the labor supply, government regulations prevented laborers from receiving more than a quarter of their wages monthly until the end of their contracts, further limiting their purchases.<sup>75</sup>

In the 1920s and early 1930s, Melanesians' wages represented from 3 to 5 percent of the European workers'; after 1934 the proportion dropped to about 1.7 percent, exclusive of rations to both groups.<sup>76</sup> Towards the end of the thirties the number of Melanesians employed at £1 a month increased,



but European wages also improved, to between £32 10s. and £35 a month (about 20 percent more than they would have been paid in Australia). Thus the Melanesians received only about 2.6 percent of the European wage, so discontent remained.<sup>77</sup> In 1939 on Nggela, Savo, and Santa Isabel there had been peaceful political meetings (called the Chair and Rule or Fallows movement) among predominantly Melanesian Mission adherents, requesting of the government, among other things, a fantastic wage of £12 a month.<sup>78</sup> Soon after in 1940, when the resident commissioner made a rare tour, villagers on Santa Cruz (Ndenö) asked for a wage increase from the standard 10s. a month to £6, plus £2 10s. for rations;<sup>79</sup> and “one bright youth wanted a wage of twelve pounds a month.”<sup>80</sup> Islanders on Santa Cruz, through its Melanesian Mission connections, certainly were aware of the wage demands of the Chair and Rule movement.

In contrast to the situation in the rest of the protectorate, Melanesians at Vanikoro received support and perhaps even inspiration from European workers in their wage demands. In 1940 the Vanikoro Kauri Timber Company had yet to make a profit, so to cut costs the then-manager, Sven Boye, decreased the number of laborers on wages in excess of 10s. When in August 1941, some Europeans told the Melanesians of their wage scale, it so heightened discontent that some went to the district officer, asking for more money.<sup>81</sup> A couple of months later a European, Colliss, was telling the men, “They can’t make us work in the rain.”<sup>82</sup> This fell on receptive ears, and by the end of the year the Melanesians, encouraged by Colliss and others, demanded overtime and often stopped “working at the slightest rain or even hint of it.”<sup>83</sup>

Despite bonds between the workers of the two races, the Melanesians themselves had not developed an ethnic or even class consciousness strong enough to forestall management’s successful manipulation of island or area identity for the purpose of controlling refractory employees. In about 1939 one of the European bush foremen, “Jimmy,” found his gang taking it easy when they were supposed to be working. After being reprimanded, a Malaitan threatened to kill the foreman, pointing out that as Malaitans had killed District Officer William Bell in 1927 on Malaita, they could do the same to him. “Jimmy” taunted them by contrasting their laziness to the industry of the Santa Cruz District men, which only inflamed the Malaitans more. They retorted that the Santa Cruz men were all like women, which angered the Santa Cruz party. The Santa Cruz men and presumably the Malaitans asked both the district officer, Wilson, and the manager, Boye, if they could resolve the matter among themselves. As perceived by the Santa Cruz men, Boye’s attitude was that the Malaitans had it coming to them, as they had insulted the local men and defied the Europeans. In a rather sur-



real setting on the foreshore of Paeu under the floodlights of the steamer, the men fought late at night, before the ship sailed at dawn. Fighting was hand to hand with sticks and the odd knife, but no one was seriously injured, even among the outnumbered Malaitans.<sup>84</sup>

Fighting of greater magnitude was to affect Vanikoro. The Japanese invaded the Solomons in 1942, capturing Tulagi in May, then were forced back and out of most of the islands in late 1943 by the Allies. The Japanese did not occupy the eastern Solomons, so Vanikoro escaped direct fighting, although both Japanese and American air and sea craft reconnoitred the district.<sup>85</sup> The company had evacuated most of its European staff via the New Hebrides in March 1942. There was no transport going west into the war zone to return the twenty-three Malaitans employed, but Boye found transport to send the Santa Cruz men home. Boye and his wife, Ruby, who was running the former company wireless for the Allied coastwatchers, chose to stay, and they kept the Malaitans employed in maintenance work, their irregular food supplies supplemented by a big garden. The contracts of the Malaitans expired in June 1943 and Boye wanted them as casuals until he could get them home.<sup>86</sup> They had had enough: a "bush lawyer" led the refusal and the manager had to make do with a few men from the Santa Cruz District.<sup>87</sup>

### Post-World War II: Contracted Loggers, Contracted Labor

After the war, logging did not resume in earnest until 1949, under a different arrangement. In 1941 the Vanikoro Kauri Timber Company had gone into liquidation and its operations were absorbed by the parent company in Melbourne, the Kauri Timber Company, which then ran Vanikoro as a branch. The company's main object was to use the logs for peeling in Melbourne and Brisbane. To boost production above prewar levels the logging was contracted to A. E. and E. Haling from north Queensland. The company organized shipping, supervised the contract *in situ*, sprayed the logs against borers, initially assisted the contractors with recruiting, and employed about ten laborers to maintain company property.

Before this, most overseas employees of the company had been from New Zealand, with some Australians in the 1930s. From 1949 on most were from Australia, and locally the company came to be called the "Melbourne company."<sup>88</sup> Another difference was that the indenture system, with its attendant penal clauses, was abandoned in 1947 to be replaced by civil contracts for no longer than a year. This lessened the need for reopening the district office at Vanikoro, closed in October 1944. The demise of indenture saw the Melanesians in a more powerful position vis-à-vis their employer as

the latter still had considerable responsibilities within the new regulations to provide shelter, medical care, and transport for them.<sup>89</sup>

There were changes in the protectorate labor context that emanated from Solomon Islanders' political activities elsewhere, but these had minor repercussions in the Santa Cruz District. During the war there had been much interaction between Americans and the Solomon Islands Labour Corps (SILC), formed in mid-1943 to organize Solomon Islanders for war work. Discontent with the British regime, especially among Malaitans in the corps, crystallized as a consequence of discussions with the Americans. A political movement called Maasina Rulu, or Marching Rule, developed on Malaita, Makira, and parts of Guadalcanal that, among other things, demanded a wage of £12 a month and boycotted plantations to get it. Eventually, widespread civil disobedience resulted in the imprisonment of the leaders in 1947.<sup>90</sup>

About twelve men from the Santa Cruz District had left for the SILC in March 1945.<sup>91</sup> Upon their return they brought back American largesse and word of Maasina Rulu, as did returners from school on Makira and the police force. In 1947 on the Reef Islands, rarely visited by government, members of the newly formed council heard of the plantation boycott in letters from Walter Karnape of Liebe, a Reef Islander employed as a clerk in Honiara, the postwar capital. They decided to stop men recruiting for plantations and even as crew on Fred Jones's ship, although one member said men could go at £6 a month. (Jones went instead to the Duff Islands, his wife's home, and hired a crew.) The wider objectives of Maasina Rulu were not supported in Santa Cruz,<sup>92</sup> perhaps because the people who knew of it regarded the movement as inferior to the power and organization of the Allied war machine.<sup>93</sup>

The largest increase in wages for Solomon Islanders came not from the demonstrations and boycott of Maasina Rulu, but from the successive agitations of laborers in the Santa Cruz District. Although Maasina Rulu was waning by 1950, the logging contractors, like their predecessors, found recruiting locally much less expensive. In May 1951 a group of Santa Cruz and Reef Islanders went on strike at Vanikoro, probably the first organized strike by nonindentured labor in the peacetime Solomons. With the demise of the indenture system, employers were not obliged to supply rations, except customarily where the minimum wage of £2 was paid. The men at Vanikoro were "contract" labor, employed from month to month. They received £5 a month but had to buy their own food, just as the Europeans did, which was also the standard practice when the government employed labor. The Melanesians wanted rations supplied as well as the same money. They managed to stay on strike for two weeks, which must have been very difficult as they were away from their homes and had to buy food from the expensive com-

pany store or from Fred Jones's at "the Settlement" in Paeu. Although often critical of the Halings and their Queensland logging methods, the company manager, R. McEwin, a Tasmanian, determined to counter the strikers' demands and to support the contractors.<sup>94</sup> "We are of course not prepared to meet these demands, and have been compelled to accept the consequent slowing of recruitment, which we hope will be only temporary. We propose recruiting a gang of labourers from the island of Tikopia partly as a trial measure, and partly for the psychological effect it should have on the natives of the other islands from which we recruit."<sup>95</sup>

Increasing population on Tikopia had created both a need for cash and a rationale for recruiting. With government approval, required since Tikopia with its epidemiologically vulnerable Polynesians had been closed to recruiters between 1923 and 1949, the Halings took on forty naive recruits in July 1951 on a year's contract. However, the experience with the Tikopians was that of the Santa Cruz laborers of 1926 repeated. While useful at boat repairing and jetty work, these small-island dwellers had few skills suitable to logging operations. They knew no Pijin, resulting in frustration for the foremen and a disinclination to employ any more. Their greatest asset was their docility or, as management saw it, their "loyalty" to the company. When food shortages angered the Santa Cruz and Reef Islander laborers, the Tikopians accepted them stoically.<sup>96</sup> With Tikopians, the Halings reverted to paying the minimum wage of £2 plus rations. When word of the wage got around the district men on Santa Cruz, the Reef Islands, and Utupua refused to be recruited. Finally, in March 1952 the Halings had to compromise and raise the wage to £4 plus rations (equivalent to a total of £6) for men with previous experience and £5 and rations for the four "boss-boys" employed. Counting bonuses and overtime for both races, the Melanesians' real wage was now 4.8 percent of the average European bush workers'.<sup>97</sup>

The Santa Cruz, Reef Islander, and Utupua workers succeeded in their wage demands because labor, at least half of the men experienced by this time, was in limited supply.<sup>98</sup> The attempt to split the labor force on the ethnic lines of Melanesian versus Polynesian failed because the contractors needed a skilled work force much more than they needed a docile one. And the docile Tikopians preferred Lever's plantations in the Russell Islands, where they found the work familiar and were given land.<sup>99</sup> The Melanesians capitalized on the parameters of logging on Vanikoro. The logging concern could not afford to play the waiting game with labor as the lyctus borer on land and the teredo worm in the water ruined valuable logs within a few months of felling, and expensive ships sitting unloaded in the lagoon could cost the company thousands of pounds.<sup>100</sup> Plantation work, on the other hand, was less urgent, as coconuts did not need to be processed quickly and



processed copra could be stored for months, allowing planters to take their time finding amenable cheap labor.

One of the worst confrontations in the logging industry erupted on 28 December 1952, unrelated to wages. There was a background of discontent among the labor about living conditions and food shortages, which had not been improved by a cyclone in January 1952, as well as frictions among the Europeans, some of whom were actively antagonistic to the Halings. In fact, fifty-four Europeans had resigned before completing their contracts over the previous four years. Whatever the immediate cause, forty Santa Cruz laborers dragged two of the European bush foremen from their huts, threatening to fight them. The laborers refused to work for the Halings, who radioed for government help.<sup>101</sup> The district officer from the government station at Kira Kira arrived with "a posse of seven police" to hold an inquiry.<sup>102</sup> Although evidence was lacking, two other Europeans were thought to have provoked the incident. These two were sent out on the next ship and all the Santa Cruz participants sentenced to several months' imprisonment at Kira Kira for conspiracy, forcible entry, and assault.<sup>103</sup> The rest refused to work and the contractors had to let them go. The inquiry failed to find a reason for their "hostile demonstration"<sup>104</sup> other than those described, and as ever "undue fraternisation between some of the Europeans and the native employees of the Company" was thought to have somehow contributed.<sup>105</sup>

Disgruntled European employees aired their grievances in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* regarding the high prices they had to pay for imported food at the Halings' store, which eroded their £30-a-week wage. The publicity made attracting staff even more difficult. The Halings provided no leisure facilities for Europeans, refusing to let them take a boat across to the pleasant islet of Nanunga on weekends. The field for football and cricket, well used by all before the war, had become covered in scrub.

Although the cost of food remained an issue, there were fewer shortages in the 1950s as a seaplane could be chartered in an emergency.<sup>106</sup> The Halings ran a bakery and workers could get wholemeal bread. Local "dressers," wives of European staff, and European nurses did the medical work. Unlike the doctors, these dispensed nursing care, not simply medicine, and the new sulfa drugs, antibiotics, and antimalarials made the control of most infections far easier than before the war.<sup>107</sup> Serious cases were sent to the Kira Kira hospital. Deaths among the Melanesian laborers were almost nonexistent after the war.<sup>108</sup>

Experiencing difficulty hiring Europeans, the contractors brought in six Fijians in January 1953, at £25 weekly, as drivers for the trucks and tractors. Tinkering with the labor composition did not bring long-term solutions, so

the Halings tried a more radical measure in early 1954. They instituted a shortened five-day week of forty-five hours for all employees, although the labor regulations provided for a maximum of fifty hours.<sup>109</sup> The combination of high wages plus shorter hours had ramifications, if not throughout the protectorate, certainly for other employers in the little world of Vanikoro. Normal hours, prior to 1954, had been nine hours on weekdays and five on Saturday for Melanesians, a total of fifty, with some Europeans working the same while others with different duties worked only forty-five hours.<sup>110</sup> Both the on-site company manager, McEwin, with his ten laborers and the resident trader, Fred Jones, with his were “perforce obliged to fall into line as regards the working hours, although we both agree that in the case of the Natives, two clear days a week of idleness is very liable to breed mischief”—an interesting assumption that was not applied to European workers!<sup>111</sup> This aggravated the strained relations between McEwin and the Halings, and meant a high overtime wages’ bill when the pressure was on to fill an incoming ship.<sup>112</sup> As well, the new forest officer, Chris Hadley, had to increase wages by 10s. above the protectorate standard of £2 plus rations a month, “due to agitation by his Native employees in order to be in line with wages paid here and partly on account of the high cost of staple foods at the local store upon which his ‘boys’ were reliant.”<sup>113</sup> The Forestry Department expected further pressure “to raise the labourers’ wages to approach the mill wages.”<sup>114</sup>

The agitation did not stop with Hadley’s laborers. The wireless operator and the meteorological observer, both in government employ, were paid a lower wage than the “raw recruits doing manual labour” for the Halings. This precedent hardly pleased them or the government. Moreover, the company’s European spray supervisor (who treated the logs to prevent borer infestation) received £20 weekly, while the lowest paid of the contractors’ European employees received £25, another glaring anomaly in the eyes of the workers and another contentious point between company and contractors. All this, along with the five-day week, brought resentment from other employers and interest by alert employees beyond Vanikoro.<sup>115</sup>

Throughout early 1954 men in the Santa Cruz District continued to push for even higher wages to the point where Alex Haling blamed the trader Jones. Although the district officer found nothing to support this, Jones had been a key figure in labor recruiting throughout most of the company’s history. The company had tried to charter Jones’s boat to recruit in 1928, but he refused. Thereafter the company had to rely on him and he had a virtual monopoly within the district. Jones had long been in good standing with the company, the government, and the local people. He continued recruiting in



the first years of the Halings' contract, but refused to cooperate when the company decided to introduce Tikopians to break the resistance of the workers from the rest of the Santa Cruz District. This forced the Halings to rely briefly on Captain Georgetti's *Loma* and subsequently on their own vessel, *Toby*. With his wife from the Duffs, Jones's sympathies were with the district's people; and in 1954 he had reason to resent the Halings' new venture in trading kauri gum and shell, which reduced his business at Vanikoro.<sup>116</sup>

With or without Jones's aid, the laborers could get messages to their home communities as some, through the Melanesian Mission schools, were literate: letters were sent to the Reefs and Ndenö advising would-be recruits to hold out for £7 a month plus rations. The headmen of these communities, government appointees who were often leaders in their own right, supported the strategy and so recruiting stopped.<sup>117</sup> The Haling brothers ceased meeting production targets and the Kauri Timber Company complained about logs damaged by borers and worms. The company's plywood factories relied on a regular, quality supply of peeler logs in part from Vanikoro to keep the lathes and driers producing an economically viable throughput.<sup>118</sup> The Halings became so angry with the intransigence that they told the laborers they "were finished with them" and would instead recruit Malaitans, who were now back in the labor force—without having achieved their £12 a month wage goal—following the passing of Maasina Rulu.<sup>119</sup> But Vanikoro did not appeal to the Malaitans, who were finding more congenial work in and around Honiara.<sup>120</sup> Knowledge of Malaitan lack of interest spread among laborers at Vanikoro, thanks to the Melanesian government meteorological operator who took down the wireless message, and "the news was soon abroad, with consequent loss of 'face' to the Contractors that is already apparent in the natives' attitude."<sup>121</sup>

The touring district officer intervened with "severe warnings" to the headmen concerned that no coercion was to be used to stop recruiting.<sup>122</sup> Recruiting resumed, but the Halings' labor relations went from bad to worse. The contractors brought some of this on themselves. Curiously coincidental with the new forty-five-hour week for his workers in early 1954, Alex Haling had started large-scale purchases of trochus shell from the surrounding reefs to which, of course, he had no rights. But the one hundred workers collected it anyway in their spare time, as they did the kauri gum.<sup>123</sup> Thus Haling as trader and storekeeper, in competition with Jones, was trying to win custom from the very men he employed, a role-conflict that meant he could not "afford to offend the natives in any way in relation to the way they work, for fear of losing their custom in the store, and the

privilege of buying their Shell and Kauri gum.”<sup>124</sup> This had some effect on the workers’ attitude. In August 1955 an inexperienced foreman reprimanded one of the hauler gangs for laziness, so the men walked off. Eleven ended their contracts, but most of these “no excuse time-breakers” were accommodated by friends among the Forestry Department employees.<sup>125</sup> The contractors again found themselves short of labor. They attributed this to a planned Forestry Department survey of Santa Cruz, which was creating the impression that logging was imminent and men soon would have employment close to home.<sup>126</sup>

The Haling brothers as employers had no prior experience with Melanesians and it would be easy to attribute the success of labor in extracting better wages and conditions to this. Yet some of the prewar managers had been in a similar position. These, unlike the Halings, had penal sanctions for disobedience and striking attached to contracts. However, the Vanikoro situation had been far more subtle then, as before 1947 few convictions were recorded relating to labor regulation violations, except for the 1934 walkout. Now and again a laborer had made a complaint and the European was warned or fined; a couple of men were charged with failing to obey a lawful instruction and the odd few with gambling. Most court appearances followed Christmas “celebrations.” In times of food shortage, a couple of laborers were charged with trading their rations. Isolated Vanikoro was not an island that encouraged desertion, a form of labor resistance on many plantations. Jailing at Paeu meant the offender was accessible to his fellows, given that most prisoners did maintenance work around the government station and were locked up only at night. Equitable solutions to conflicts had to be found within this minute society of workplace and government station. And the government had a big stake in conflict resolution as each log cut represented a royalty to the treasury. In the main, the district officers acted as brokers, arbitrating problems regarding indenture as well as many civil matters between Melanesians in an informal way, the extreme being the highly irregular “settlement” of the dispute between the Malaitans and the Santa Cruz group in 1939 and the norm being some form of reconciliation or compensation in the Melanesian manner. Both indentured labor and management had to accommodate each others’ demands at times to keep the enterprise operating and fill the ships. This was possible because the district officer was on the spot and was a third party perceived as being generally neutral. The Halings realized this and as early as 1950 asked to have an officer back on Vanikoro, not only to ratify yearly contracts, but also to adjudicate labor disputes, all the more delicate without the penal clauses of old.<sup>127</sup> They did not get a district officer, and in the absence of an adju-

indicator, the brothers seemed to have bowed to Melanesian demands rather than risk strikes. Early in 1954, when the government sent forest officer Hadley to conduct silviculture experiments, it hoped that his "presence at Vanikoro will assist matters"<sup>128</sup> as a "Deputy Commissioner with limitations," but he busied himself with forestry and making the semidecrepit government house at Paeu habitable for his English wife.<sup>129</sup>

### **Women in a Man's World**

Only a handful of European women lived with their company husbands on Vanikoro in the late 1920s and 1930s, and these were mainly women who had previous experience of the tropics.<sup>130</sup> In 1934 the district officer welcomed the wives of his Melanesian policemen and other government employees, providing them with rations. The women, he felt, contributed to "the civilising influence of the government station."<sup>131</sup> Civilizers they may well have been, but women were poorly paid for it by the company. The company early discovered local women could be legally employed as laundresses for less than half the wages they had to pay males.<sup>132</sup> However, among a male population of one to two hundred, women could make better money in other ways. At least one local woman, the charming Navanora of Tenema, found favor with, and sold hers to, the Melanesian government and company laborers in the 1920s, to which the district officer turned a blind eye. Navanora has entered into the mythology of both the Europeans who lived on Vanikoro and the Vanikorans who, after she died, attributed her spirit with the ability to lure young men to their deaths, like other Melanesian women of sexual power.<sup>133</sup>

A definite contribution to the health of the Melanesian workers was, for many, the presence of their wives, a policy initiated by the Halings. These women made gardens on company land, thus supplementing their rations with fresh vegetables and fruit. They had their children with them and life for married workers was closer to normal.<sup>134</sup> Most found life pleasant and relished the variety the company rations provided for their family. However, these women experienced some unwanted attentions from Reef and Santa Cruz men. After the Forestry Department began work on Vanikoro, the number of workers grew to eleven in 1958 and around sixty in 1963.<sup>135</sup> These were particularly troublesome. The mainly Malaitan and Nggelan would-be Lotharios came "creeping" around the women's houses. The Santa Cruz District husbands set a series of compensatory fines for dealing with the troublemakers and, if that failed, persistent offenders were handed over to the touring district officer. Married women and their husbands were not always



averse to arrangements that paid, and dealing in women's sexual services by Santa Cruz men has a long history.<sup>136</sup> In 1958 the company manager found two cases of "social disease" among his laborers. He shipped them home and sent the woman concerned and her husband to the Kira Kira hospital.<sup>137</sup>

### Contesting Company Control

The Halings' contract was up for renewal in December 1955, but the Kauri Timber Company resumed control of logging as it was dissatisfied with log production and the Halings' request for higher payment.<sup>138</sup> The company inherited the Halings' labor relations legacy: "a very great prejudice against Vanikoro" that needed to be overcome as Lever's and Faerymead plantations were recruiting heavily in Santa Cruz District. The company set about rectifying matters immediately by reducing store prices to Solomon Islanders, as well as to Europeans.<sup>139</sup>

Disputes continued, nevertheless. Early in 1956 laborers demanded two shillings an hour overtime instead of one: a reasonable demand in their eyes as Europeans on a much higher wage scale got time-and-a-half. The rate was certainly an issue, but the laborers also expressed fears of working when they were tired, as there had been two accidents involving hauler "boys." The company desperately needed overtime work to fill the ships. It considered ways to force the men back to work: deletion of the traditional but nonregulation tobacco, soap and matches, free transport from the bush workings to Paeu, the Saturday morning holiday, and so on. Several of the European workers wanted these measures and more, to assure the laborers would know "who were the big white masters."<sup>140</sup> Extended discussions over a week revealed that the Solomon Islanders deeply resented the racist way some of the European bushmen were behaving. They refused to work with Phil Haebeck, who swore roughly at them, a particularly insulting act in the eyes of Melanesians.<sup>141</sup> The manager, L. Filewood, dismissed Haebeck, censured the actions of another European who "romps with them [Solomon Islanders] on Sunday and curses them on Monday," and monitored the behavior of others of whom the laborers had complained. These, Filewood believed, "are a poor type and whilst they may know their job they have not yet learned the way to handle the natives. . . . They are incapable of realising that they have no more right to swear at them and abuse the boys than I have to do the same to them; also that they are not in a position to impose 'fines' upon the boys when the mood dictates, which happens after a heavy weekend and is tempered more with bile than justice."<sup>142</sup>

Although Haebeck's dismissal got the men back to work, trouble broke

out again a few months later over the overtime question. Filewood, deciding that "force, applied correctly, must be exerted," threatened to terminate the men's contracts and require them to find their own way home. The workers capitulated.<sup>143</sup> Between 1956 and 1960 the company gradually created a better working relationship with the Solomon Islanders and wages rose to a minimum of £5 a month plus rations, total value being 6.8 percent of the European wage. In 1960 Solomon Islanders again demanded higher wages, but had other difficulties with the company. Santa Cruz men refused to sign on, so the main source became the Reef Islands. A recruiter named Tom Hepworth alienated these people, who refused to sail with him. The company was forced to send its own small vessel, the *Toby*, if it wanted men. Another issue concerned a bush foreman named Kealy who, in the view of both the Reef Islanders and the manager, acted unjustly when he sacked five men from the Reefs. All the Reef Islanders walked off the job, demanding that their countrymen be reinstated. Although the manager reprimanded the men and deprived them of their tobacco ration for a week, he did reinstate the sacked workers, knowing that if he did not he ran the risk of getting no more from the Reefs. Kealy took umbrage and resigned. Agitation for an increase in wages underlay this, the men wanting a raise from £4 to £8 a month with rations.<sup>144</sup>

The company was prepared to pay for skills and had to compete with the Forestry Department.<sup>145</sup> By 1963 the company had raised wages to £6 plus rations with a bonus of £5 for anyone who stayed for a second one-year term. The Santa Cruz men returned and, for the first time, men from Makira were recruited. With the gradual increase in mechanization over the years the company valued its skilled labor, but had no systematic training scheme. Bill Powell, the manager in 1963, who had worked for both the Halings and the company, wanted to see more Solomon Islanders doing skilled work, so he trained several men to drive tractors. He also had the logging camp at Emwa completely run by Melanesians. By late 1963 the company employed three local men as tractor drivers. They were good as drivers of the diesel haulers. Powell was training two men to operate chain saws.<sup>146</sup> And, "as seamen on launches, or anywhere connected with the water, the natives are better than the whites."<sup>147</sup> The company gradually reduced the European workers from about twenty in the Halings' time to six (see Table 1). Melanesians were now being paid 10 percent of the Europeans' wage. These skills were not to be long utilized by the company as its losses had been so great over the decades that it ceased operation in 1964, with kauri left scattered in the forest, just at the time major logging commenced in the western Solomons. Former laborers in the Santa Cruz District regretted the company's demise.<sup>148</sup>



## Conclusion

After the war the workers of European descent who came to Vanikoro were Australians, whose record in relations with indigenous people was poor by comparison to the New Zealanders who had preceded them. This could be a simple explanation for the outbursts of animosity between Europeans and Melanesians in the postwar era. But there were other factors. Although resistant to any erosion of their wages and terms, the prewar Europeans, the earliest inured to demanding conditions in the kauri bush in New Zealand or fleeing the Depression there and in Australia, had lower expectations regarding creature comforts than their successors. This left them open to greater contact with, and often sympathy for, the Melanesians. From these men the Melanesians learned work skills and considerably more about methods available to the worker to win demands than anywhere else in the Solomons. Over time, management was ambivalent about "fraternisation" between the races; such contact could help get the job done, but it could also lead to solidarity, hence it was feared and blamed for almost any labor trouble. The postwar Europeans left the increasingly robust economies of Australia and New Zealand. Tantalized by the occasional visit of a seaplane and chaffing under the trying climate, the lack of amenities particularly in the caravan accommodation of the camps, the grudging attitude of the Halings, and the high store prices for food, they grew discontented and this discontent overflowed into relations with the Solomon Islanders. For several men, their stay was so brief that they hardly had time to get to know the Melanesians. Some were from Tasmania and others from Queensland; each group had different ways of logging. A more fundamental difference among postwar Australians was between the "old" Australians of British extraction and the "new" Australians, refugees and immigrants from war-ravaged Europe. They often fell out with each other. Moreover, it would have been improbable that "British" Australians' liking for, say, a former member of Hitler's Youth was any greater than his for the dark-skinned Melanesians.<sup>149</sup>

Unlike the European bush workers, many Melanesians had their families with them and were relatively close to their homes. These workers did not lose the feeling of continuity in the year or more they were away earning money. For some families the time at Vanikoro was good because they had access to foods that were a luxury in the villages. Essentially, in the Halings' era the Europeans wanted better conditions that included less outlay on food and the Melanesians wanted more money, as they early had forced the contractors to provide valuable rations. Thus the two groups of labor did not share the same objectives, reducing the possibility of labor solidarity.

The European community was particularly fragmented, a situation known

to the Melanesians. The standard employer tactics of divide and rule that Boye had invoked successfully before the war, pivoting on the presence of Malaitans, backfired on the Haling brothers when they failed to bring the more experienced Santa Cruz work force to heel on the wages issue, leaving them with untrained Tikopians and subsequently no Malaitans. The brothers compromised their authority as employers by trading with their employees in 1954 and by hiring incompetent foremen, providing the Melanesians with justifiable excuses for wage leverage and protest. All these factors gave the men of Santa Cruz District the tactical and psychological edge.

However, the primary factor in determining the relations between Melanesian labor and management was the limited number of skilled workers and the costs that precluded an alternative supply from beyond the district. Vanikoro itself, with its isolation and trying environment, had earned a bad reputation among Malaitans as well as Tikopians, so they selected more attractive propositions when the opportunity arose. Moreover, when the Forestry Department began its work the alternative for other local employment forced the company to compete for skilled workers. Vanikoro presented an industrial situation unique in the Solomons because loss of labor-time had expensive ramifications, with log-carrying ships and the company's Australian mills dependent on its output to maintain an economic throughput. This state of affairs placed severe constraints on management's bargaining power at Vanikoro, particularly after the war. Once the indenture system had disappeared, wage-bargaining and strikes became not only more feasible, but also legal. These were the circumstances that the laborers, mainly of the Santa Cruz District, exploited with notable success. By the early 1950s they had regained their pre-1934 relativity with the European wage, and within a decade had doubled it to 10 percent of the European scale. In the process their regulation hours of work diminished by 10 percent. They had proved not so feeble, after all.

### ABBREVIATIONS

ARED	Annual Report, Eastern District
ARLD	Annual Report, Labour Department
ARSC	Annual Report, Santa Cruz District
BSIP	British Solomon Islands Protectorate Series, National Archives of Solomon Islands, Honiara
DO	District Officer
HC	High Commissioner
<i>PIM</i>	<i>Pacific Islands Monthly</i>
QRSC	Quarterly Report, Santa Cruz District
RC	Resident Commissioner

- VR Vanikoro Timber Company Records, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, Australia
- WPHC Western Pacific High Commission, Public Record Office, London

## NOTES

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2. Michael Roche, *History of New Zealand Forestry* (Wellington: New Zealand Forestry Corporation, 1990), 107–115.

3. See Judith A. Bennett, "Pacific Forest? A History of Resource Control and Contest in Solomon Islands, Towards 2000," manuscript.

4. A. H. Reed, *The New Story of Kauri* (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1964); Ted Ashby, *Blackie: A Story of an Old-time Bushman* (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1978); Duncan Mackay, "The Orderly Frontier: The World of the Kauri Bushman 1860–1925," *New Zealand Journal of History* 25, no. 2 (1991): 147–157.

5. Ashby, *Blackie*, 68–77, 83.

6. Bennett, *Pacific Forest?*

7. Jules S.-C. Dumont D'Urville, *An Account of Two Voyages to the South Seas*, trans. Helen Rosenman, vol. 1 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1987), 236; WPHC 1023/22: Middenway to RC, 24 Feb. 1922.

8. Charles Price with Elizabeth Baker, "Origins of Islands Labourers in Queensland, 1863–1904: A Research Note," *Journal of Pacific History* 11, part 1 (1976): 115; Jeff Siegel, "Origins of Pacific Islands Labourers in Fiji," *Journal of Pacific History* 20, no. 1 (1985): 42–45; Dorothy Shineberg, pers. com., 6 Nov. 1995. See WPHC 10/90, 359/90, 52/99, 175/99, 241/99.

9. Cecil Wilson, *The Wake of the Southern Cross: Work and Adventure in the South Seas* (London: John Murray, 1932), 57–148; David Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission, 1849–1942* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1978), 66–67; *British Solomon Islands, Report, 1898–99* (London: HMSO, 1899).

10. BSIP 9/III/3: QRSC, Sept. 1936.

11. WPHC 63/13: Vernon, Notes on the Solomon Islands, 9 Jan. 1913.
12. VR: Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954.
13. Judith A. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, ca. 1800–1978* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), 82–83, 165; Ashby, *Blackie*, 72; Roy Struben, *Coral and Colour of Gold* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 19; WPHC 1525/32: RC to HC, 10 May 1932.
14. VR: Secy. to [HC], 7 Aug. 1929, Gov. depts. to and from 1926–1934.
15. WPHC 1290/30: ARSC 1929.
16. VR: Dawe to Secy., 24 Feb. 1932, Corres. 1932–1936.
17. VR: de Bondy to DO, 28 Jan. 1926; Smith to Secy., 31 May 1928, Corres. 1925–1931.
18. VR: de Bondy to DO, 28 Jan. 1926, Corres. 1925–1931; Hugh Laracy, "Unwelcome Guests: The Solomons Chinese," *New Guinea and Australia, the Pacific and South-east Asia* 8, no. 4 (1974): 27–37; Bennett, *Wealth*, 150–152.
19. VR: Smith to Secy., 31 May 1928, Corres. 1925–1931.
20. WPHC 1290/30: ARSC 1929; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1930; VR: Smith to Secy., 16 June 1928, Corres. 1925–1931.
21. Bennett, *Wealth*, 83; WPHC 1121/24: ARLD 1923; WPHC 1197/25: ARLD 1924; WPHC 1170/26: ARLD 1925; WPHC 1510/27: ARLD 1926; WPHC 1835/28: ARLD 1927; WPHC 1426/29: ARLD 1928; WPHC 809/30: ARLD 1929; WPHC 755/31: ARLD 1930; WPHC 1228/32: ARLD 1931; WPHC 506/33: ARLD 1932; WPHC 920/34: ARLD 1933; WPHC 1612/35: ARLD 1934; WPHC 1598/36: ARLD 1935; WPHC 2744/37: ARLD 1936; WPHC 1638/38: ARLD 1937; WPHC 2469/40: ARLD 1939; WPHC 2399/41: ARLD 1940. Compare with William Davenport, "The Population of the Outer Reef Islands, British Solomon Islands Protectorate," in *Pacific Atoll Populations*, ed. Vern Carroll (Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i, 1975), 81.
22. Bennett, *Wealth*, 162.
23. VR: Dawe to Administrator, 23 Jan. 1926, Gov. depts. to and from.
24. VR: Court to Chairman, 15 Nov. 1926, Corres. 1925–1931; Dawe to Secy., 4 Nov. 1933, Employees' Corres. 1932–1953.
25. Harold M. Ross, *Baegu: Social and Ecological Organization in Malaita, Solomon Islands* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 107.
26. VR: Smith to Secy., 31 May 1928, 16 June 1928, Corres. 1925–1931.



27. VR: Cowan to de Bondy, 28 Dec. 1925, Gov. depts. to and from 1926.
28. VR: Curtis, Report, June(?) 1928, Corres. 1925–1931.
29. VR: Butler, Report, Vanikoro, Aug. 1926.
30. VR: Zinneck to Curtis, 26 Oct. 1926, Gov. depts. to and from.
31. VR: Butler, Report, Vanikoro, Aug. 1926.
32. VR: Cowan to Curtis, n.d. [Oct. 1926], Gov. depts. to and from; photographs in collection.
33. VR: Secy. to Pilling, 10 Dec. 1925, Gov. depts. to and from.
34. VR: Secy. to Secy. of Gov., 7 Aug. 1929, Gov. depts. to and from; Colin Newbury, "Colour Bar and Labour Conflict on the New Guinea Goldfields 1935–1941," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 21, no. 3 (1975): 30–33; Emberson-Bain, *Labour and Gold*, 83–85.
35. VR: Director's Minute Book, 27 Nov. 1925.
36. VR: Secy. Melbourne to Secy. of Gov., 7 Aug. 1929, Gov. depts. to and from; Proposed Logging Policy, 24 June 1953, Reports; BSIP 9/III/3: QRSC, Mar. 1929; BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1953.
37. VR: Dawe to Court, 31 May 1932, Corres. to and from 1932–1936.
38. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1932; A. M. Deland to mother, 25 Oct. 1926, A. M. Deland Papers, National Library of Australia, Canberra. See also VR: Dawe to Secy., 30 May 1932, Corres. 1932–1936.
39. F. J. Hickie, "Coconut Planting in the British Solomons," *The Planters Gazette* (Solomon Islands Planters Association, Sydney), Dec. 1922, 12.
40. Bennett, *Wealth*, 167–191.
41. VR: Cowan to Secy., 30 Nov. 1925, Corres. 1925–1931.
42. VR: Curtis, Report, June(?) 1928, Corres. 1925–1931.
43. VR: Cowan to Secy., 30 Nov. 1925, Corres. 1925–1931.
44. VR: Secy. to Madden, 4 June 1930 and encls.
45. Ashby, *Blackie*, 77.
46. BSIP 9/V/5: Ashley, Inspection Notes, Sept. 1929; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1932; VR: photographs.



47. BSIP 9/V/5: Ashley, Inspection Notes, Sept. 1929; VR: Deland, Report, Apr. 1927, Corres. 1925–1931.
48. Bennett, *Wealth*, 167–191; WPHC 1525/27: Middenway to RC, 10 Mar. 1927.
49. WPHC 1525/27: Middenway to RC, 10 Mar. 1927.
50. VR: Curtis to Chairman, 7 May 1927, Corres. 1932–1936.
51. See VR: Boye to Secy., 7 Oct. 1941, Corres. 1939–1949; Boye to Secy., 22 May 1939, Corres. 1937–1939.
52. VR: Smith to Secy., 16 June 1928, Island Reports.
53. Joseph Odofia of Mari Mari, Malaita, interview, 1976.
54. VR: Kelly to Secy., 28 Mar. 1935, Employees' Corres. 1932–1953; Struben, *Coral*, 83. For comparison, see Manager to Carpenter, 4 May 1929, W. R. Carpenter Papers, in writer's care.
55. BSIP 9/III/3: QRSC, Mar. 1929; BSIP 9/V/5: Ashley, Inspection Notes, Sept. 1929; WPHC 1290/30: ARSC 1929 and encl.; VR: Shortland and Driver to Directors, 5 June 1930; O'Shea to Court, 27 June 1930, Corres. A-Z 1935–1941.
56. Bennett, *Wealth*, 150–166.
57. VR: Secy. to Gullett, 4 Feb. 1932, Gov. depts. to and from.
58. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1930; VR: Secy. to Kelly, 30 Nov. 1932, Corres. 1932–1936; Report, 9 Apr. 1931, Corres. 1925–1931; Director's Minute Book, 27 Jan., 19 Aug. 1931, 4 July 1932, 2 Aug. 1933. Real wages for Europeans were reduced by requiring them to supply their own rations, valued in 1930 at £1 a week. VR: Employees' Accounts and Contracts 1930–1940.
59. VR: Dawe to Secy., 4 Nov. 1933, Corres. 1933–1934.
60. VR: Secy. to Gullett, 4 Feb. 1932; Hall to Secy., 23 Dec. 1932; Synan to Director, 27 Feb. 1933, Gov. depts. to and from; Secy. to Wilson, 20 June 1933, Corres. 1932–1936.
61. Bennett, *Wealth*, 222.
62. VR: Dawe to Secy., 24 Nov. 1934, Corres. 1932–1936.
63. WPHC 1587/35: Diary, Santa Cruz, 8 Jan. 1935; WPHC 1541/34: ARSC 1933; VR: Secy. to Manager, 15 Jan. 1935, Corres. 1932–1936; Bennett, *Wealth*, 197–198. The tax was imposed in the early 1920s and continued throughout the 1930s.
64. WPHC 1359/34: Diary, Santa Cruz, 14 May, 16–31 Aug. 1934; Bennett, *Wealth*, 172–173; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1934; VR: Kelly, [ca. June 1935], Employees' Corres. 1932–1953.

65. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1934; WPHC 1612/35: ARLD 1934.
66. Ashby, *Blackie*, 91; VR: Director's Minute Book, 14 Sept. 1934; Dawe to Secy., 24 Nov. 1934, Corres. 1932–1936; Kelly to Director, 6, 28 Mar., 29 June, 27 Aug., 9, 23, 25, 26 Sept., 30 Oct., 19 Nov. 1935; Mrs. Kelly to Brunell, 19 July 1935; Courtney to Barwell, 11 Nov. 1937, Corres. 1937–1939; Board Minutes of Kauri Timber Co., 20 Aug. 1925. See also BSIP 9/III/3: QRSC, Mar. 1929, June 1936.
67. WPHC 477/96: Annual Report, British Solomon Islands Protectorate, 1896; *The Sun* (Sydney), 6 Aug. 1911; WPHC 83/1932: Garvey, The Depopulation of Vanikoro, 2 Jan. 1932.
68. WPHC 1587/35: Diary, Santa Cruz, 10–30 Dec. 1935, Mar. 1936.
69. WPHC 2122/36: Miller to Manager, 4 July 1936; Hetherington to Acting RC, 25 Aug. 1936 and encls. The Malaitans were Tariria (of Itum, Taka Taka), Isnarna (Apapor), Kahui (Huareah), Onomai (Waiaha), Marmia'a (Huapenalia), Paemae (Saroasi), and Marmia (Alalo); the Santa Cruz men were Membalu (Noli) and Menora (Venga); and the Reef Islander was Matoko of Tenga (*sic*).
70. VR: Wilson to Secy., 16 Aug. 1933, Corres. 1935; Bennett, *Wealth*, 177; Chris Hadley, *A Forester in the Solomon Islands, Diary and Letters, 1953–1958* (Sussex: Book Guild, 1991), 54, 95.
71. WPHC 1587/35: Diary, Santa Cruz, May–Nov. 1936; BSIP 9/III/3: QRSC, Apr., June 1936, encl.; WPHC 2122/36: Hetherington to Acting RC, 25 Aug. 1936 and encls.; WPHC 2744/37: ARLD; VR: Wilson to Secy., 16 Aug. 1933; Courtney to Miller, 11 July 1936; Courtney to Secy., 14 July 1936, Corres. 1932–1936; Hadley, *A Forester*, 234.
72. VR: Courtney to Burwell, 30 Sept., 11 Nov. 1937, Corres. 1937–1939; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1938, ARSC 1939; WPHC 2399/41: ARLD 1940.
73. VR: Smith to Secy., 18 Aug. 1928; Secy. to Curtis, 25 May 1927, Corres. 1925–1931; Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports; WPHC 2122/36: Hetherington to Acting RC, 25 Aug. 1936; Crichlow to Hetherington, 12 Dec. 1936.
74. VR: Boye to Secy., 10 Nov. 1941, Corres. 1939–1949. See also WPHC 2464/14; WPHC 1538/16; WPHC 3091/15; WPHC 2667/22.
75. WPHC 827/30: King's Regulation No. 7 of 1923 (encl. with Report of Labour Commission, 1929).
76. VR: Faithfull, 1925, Reports; de Bondy to DO, 28 Jan. 1926, Corr. 1925–1931; McGregor, 9 Nov. 1929, Contracts; Director's Minute Book, 11 Dec. 1925.
77. VR: Dawe to Secy., 22 Mar. 1937; Employees' Accounts and Contracts, 1930–1940; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1939.
78. Bennett, *Wealth*, 259–263.

79. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1940.
80. BSIP 9/V/5: Notes on RC's Tour, 1940.
81. VR: Boye to Secy., 8 May 1940, 13 Aug. 1941, Corres. 1939–1949.
82. VR: Boye to Secy., 7 Oct. 1941, Corres. 1939–1949.
83. VR: Boye to Secy., 6 Dec. 1941, Corres. 1939–1949.
84. Dudley Kiau of Buma, Vanikoro, interview, 1992.
85. Bennett, *Wealth*, 286–292.
86. VR: Boye to staff, 9 Feb. 1942; Boye to Secy., 19 Feb. 1942; Boye to Gibson et al., 17 Mar. 1942; Boye to Secy., 17 Mar., 2, 26 May, 24 June, 18 Sept., and 31 Dec. 1942, 25 Mar. and 5 July 1943, Corres. 1939–1949.
87. VR: Boye to Secy., 5 July 1943, Corres. 1939–1949; Kiau, interview.
88. VR: Smith to Secy., 18 Aug. 1928, Corres. and Reports; O'Shea to Court, 27 June 1930, Corres. A–Z 1935–1941; Rogers, Report, Sept. 1961, Reports; Walter Rapo of Lavaka, Vanikoro, interview, 1992.
89. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1944; British Solomon Islands Protectorate, *The Laws of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate: Labour* (London: HMSO, 1963), 313–353. See also VR: King's Regulation No. 5 of 1947, 1 Aug. 1947.
90. Bennett, *Wealth*, 292–299; Hugh Laracy, ed., *Pacific Protest: The Maasina Rule Movement, Solomon Islands, 1944–1952* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1983).
91. R. A. Dethridge, former company employee, led the recruiting expedition. BSIP F 28/14 part I: Archer to Parkinson, 9 July 1945 and encl.
92. BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1947; Ben Tua of Buma, Vanikoro, interview, 1992; BSIP 9/I: Jones to DO, 20 Apr. 1947. Cf. Davenport, "The Population of the Outer Reef Islands," 82.
93. William Davenport, "Experiences of Santa Cruz Islanders," in *The Pacific Theater: Island Representations of World War II*, ed. Geoffrey White and Lamont Lindstrom (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989), 270–274; Tua, interview.
94. VR: McEwin to Secy., 4 Apr., 23 May 1951, 12 Apr. 1954, Corres. 1949–1960; *PIM*, Mar. 1933, 133; George Moody, pers. com., 1994. McEwin was the assigned officer to witness the maximum one-year contracts as well as other government business.
95. VR: McEwin to Secy., 23 May 1951, Corres. 1949–1960.
96. Raymond Firth, *Social Change in Tikopia: A Re-study of a Polynesian Community after a Generation* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959), 47, 115 n, 121–122; Moody, pers. com.

97. Eric H. Larson, "Tikopian Labour Migration to the Russell Islands," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 77, no. 2 (1968): 163, 165, 172; Bennett, *Wealth*, 177; VR: Monthly Reports, July, Sept. 1951, Mar., June 1952; Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports; WPHC F 15/52: DC to Secy. to Gov., 11 June 1953.

98. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1941.

99. J. Spillius, "Polynesian Experiment: Tikopia Islanders as Plantation Labour," *Progress*, 46–47 (1957): 91–96; Larson, "Tikopian Labour Migration," 163–175.

100. See, for example, VR: Boye to Secy., 23 June 1939, Corres. 1937–1939; McEwin to Secy., 20 Mar. 1950, Corres. 1949–1960; Davidson(?), Reports, Apr. 1950–22 July 1954, Victorian Manager's Reports.

101. VR: McEwin to Secy., 31 July 1951, 8 Jan., 10 Feb. 1953; Moody to Secy., 3 Feb. 1952, Corres. 1949–1960; Kiai, interview; *PIM*, Mar. 1933, 133.

102. VR: McEwin to Secy., 8 Jan. 1931, Corres. 1949–1960.

103. BSIP F 15/52: DC to Secy. to Gov., 11 Jan. 1953.

104. VR: McEwin to Secy., 10 Feb. 1953, Corres. 1949–1960.

105. BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1953.

106. *PIM*, Feb. 1953, 16; Apr. 1953, 45; Jan. 1955, 80; VR: Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports.

107. Clifford S. James, *Diseases Commonly Met with in Melanesia and Polynesia* (Auckland: Institute Printing and Publishing Society, 1956), 5, 10–14, 34, 47–50, 61.

108. *PIM*, July 1952, 107; VR: Boye to Secy., 8 and 18 May 1940, 10 Nov. 1941, Corres. 1939–1949; McEwin to Secy., 20 Oct. 1949, Corres. 1949–1960; Monthly Reports, 1951–1960; BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1941, 1944–1955; Hadley, *A Forester*, 50, 89–90; Tua, interview; Caspar of Malo, Te Motu Neo, interview, 1992.

109. *PIM*, Mar. 1953, 133; VR: Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports; McEwin to Secy., 12 Apr. 1954, Corres. 1949–1960; *Annual Report of British Solomon Islands Protectorate, 1953–1954* (London: HMSO, 1955), 11. The task or "contract" system by which bonuses for extra production were added to minimum wage was common on plantations in the 1930s. Bennett, *Wealth*, 160, 221, 226; Larson, "Tikopian Labour Migration," 169–170.

110. VR: McEwin to Secy., 12 Apr. 1954, Corres. 1949–1960.

111. VR: McEwin to Secy., 18 Jan. 1954, Corres. 1949–1960.

112. Jonah Menape of Niep, Ndenö, interview, 1992; Kiau, interview. For an account of a typical loading operation see *PIM*, Jan. 1955, 80, 94–95.



113. VR: McEwin to Secy., 12 Apr. 1954, Corres. 1949–1960.
114. WPHC F45/5/7: Logie to Financial Secy., 8 Mar. 1954.
115. VR: McEwin to Secy., 18 Jan. 1954, Corres. 1949–1960.
116. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1932; BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1954; VR: Smith to Secy., 16 June 1928, Corres. 1925–1931; McEwin, Monthly Report, Mar. 1951; McEwin to Secy., 31 July 1951; McEwin to Secy., 30 Mar. 1954, Corres. 1949–1960; Rapo, interview; Kiau, interview. William Davenport mistakenly states Jones left the district permanently during the war. He left about ten years later. Davenport, "The Population of the Outer Reef Islands," 81.
117. BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1954.
118. VR: Secy. to Manager, 22 Apr. 1953, Corres. 1949–1960; McEwin, Proposed Logging Policy, 24 June 1953; Davidson, Report on Logs from Vanikoro, 21 July 1954, Victorian Manager's Reports; Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954; Rogers, Report, Sept. 1961, Reports; Haling to Secy., 3 Oct. 1955 and encl.; Davidson(?), Reports, Apr. 1950–22 July 1954; Greentree to Secy., 18 Jan., 15 Mar., 14 May 1954, Newmarket Plywood Pty. Ltd. Corres.
119. VR: Monthly Report, Apr. 1954.
120. Bennett, *Wealth*, 308.
121. VR: Monthly Report, Apr. 1954.
122. BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1954.
123. VR: McEwin to Secy., 30 Mar. 1954, Corres. 1949–1960. A ton of shell bought for £75 at Vanikoro fetched £280–300 in Sydney. VR: McEwin to Secy., 30 Mar. 1954, Corres. 1949–1960.
124. VR: Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports.
125. Hadley, *A Forester*, 164–165.
126. VR: Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports; Monthly Report, Aug., Nov. 1955; Filewood to Secy., 30 Sept. 1955, Corres. 1949–1960; Hadley, *A Forester*, 164–165.
127. WPHC 1422/29: ARSC 1928; WPHC 1290/30: ARSC 1929; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1930–1944; WPHC 1359/34: Diary, Santa Cruz, May–Sept. 1934; BSIP 9/III/3: QRSC, 31 Dec. 1935; BSIP 9/V/5: Diary, Santa Cruz, 20 Apr. 1937; BSIP 9/I: Tour Report, Santa Cruz, Dec. 1950; Mo'ea Pepechi of Vatumanivo, Guadalcanal, interview, 1976.
128. BSIP 9/III/1: Comments on ARED 1953; VR: King's Regulation No. 5 of 1947.

129. Hadley, *A Forester*, 29, 35–36, 40–43, and following pages.
130. VR: Smith to Secy., 5 Oct. 1928, Corres. 1925–1931; Kelly to Secy., 18 Mar. 1935, Corres. 1937–1939; Moodie, Application, 31 Aug. 1937, Job Applications, 1932–1938; *Sun and Guardian* (Sydney), 10 July 1932; B. Burke, pers. com., 1994.
131. WPHC 1359/34: Diary, Santa Cruz, 2 Mar. 1934.
132. VR: Dawe to Administrator, 23 Jan. 1926, Gov. depts. to and from. Women came under the “light work” category. WPHC 827/30: King’s Regulation No. 7 of 1923 (encl. with Report of Labour Commission, 1929).
133. Hector MacQuarrie, *Vouza and the Solomon Islands* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1946), 48–65; see also Struben, *Coral*, 85; Hadley, *A Forester*, 54–55. The same is said of a ghost woman who haunts the Kira Kira area.
134. Mari Lauuli of Buma, Vanikoro, interview, 1992; Kiau, interview.
135. Forestry Dept., *Annual Reports 1954, 1960–1963* (Honiara: Government Printer, 1955, 1961–1964).
136. Lauuli, interview; Davenport, “The Population of the Outer Reef Islands,” 73–75; WPHC 1187/26: RC to HC, 21 May 1926 and encls.
137. VR: Monthly Report, July 1958.
138. VR: Outline of Proposed Increase in Production, June 1957, Reports.
139. VR: Monthly Report, Jan. 1956.
140. VR: Monthly Report, May 1956.
141. VR: Filewood to Secy., 29 May 1956, Corres. 1949–1960.
142. VR: Monthly Report, May 1956.
143. VR: Filewood to Secy., 9 July 1956, Corres. 1949–1960.
144. Forestry Dept., *Annual Report 1956* (Honiara: Government Printer, 1957); VR: Bennett(?) to Secy., 3, 15 Oct., 7 Dec. 1960, Letters from Manager 1960–1964; Hanson, Royalty Appraisal, Oct. 1958.
145. Forestry Dept., *Annual Report 1960* (Honiara: Government Printer, 1961), 18.
146. VR: Powell to Secy., 3 June, 6 Nov. 1963, Letters from Manager 1960–1964; Menape, interview.

147. VR: Rogers to Taylor, 21 Nov. 1963, Reports 1949–1963.

148. VR: Wilber Saxton Report, 21 Nov. 1963, Reports; Reginald Walter Bila and Benjamin Kase of Lavaka, Basile Yabwe of Vanikoro, interviews, 1992; Tua, Caspar, Menape, interviews.

149. Hadley, *A Forester*, 91–92, 171, 290.

## MAMMON IN PARADISE: ECONOMIC ENTERPRISE IN PACIFIC HISTORIOGRAPHY

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With a few notable exceptions, Pacific history still lacks a corpus of business studies that apply the techniques of business history elsewhere. The reasons for this gap are explored below, and the early evolution of business enterprise is traced from its origins in the "agency house" system, through partnerships that left few records before the emergence of joint stock companies, as a consequence of the expansion of facilities for bulk transport and the generalized functions of the earliest firms. The historiographical strengths and weaknesses of works covering Pacific agriculture and extractive industries reveal, in general, a failure to pay sufficient attention to the measurement of "profit" and to management, compared with sources of public and private capital investment. Closer attention to these factors would raise studies of the exploitation of Pacific staples and services to the high level reached in labor history and would advance our understanding of the relationship between business and politics in the colonial and postcolonial periods.

THE PURPOSE of this article is to raise questions about the place of business history in Pacific studies. It has its origins in a comparative review of the evolution of colonial firms in Africa, published some years ago, and in my own use of business records for the mining industry in South Africa and for plantations and mining in Papua New Guinea and French Polynesia. It will reflect reactions to a series of books and theses that have appeared over the past twenty years treating various sectors of Pacific economic history. Our debt to those who have wrestled with the source material peculiar to the operations of a firm is in no way diminished by a sense that we have, perhaps, failed to exploit these sources to the full, and, indeed, in some cases



have shied away from the challenge of accounting for the structure and function of a wide range of business in the Pacific Islands.

This is partly because of the fragmented and often transitory nature of business records. Business history as developed in Europe and North America, and in African and Asian studies is now a highly sophisticated (not to say esoteric) form with its own specialist journals and its own historiographical landmarks. Such model works fix on the big firms, typically those that diversified overseas and developed into multinational enterprises. For the Pacific, Unilever, the Colonial Sugar Refinery in Fiji, perhaps Burns Philp, and some of the Hawaiian "Big Five" stand in the same league, and there are other candidates (*Société le Nickel*, *Maison Ballande*, postwar New Guinea mining companies) that await their historians.

There is the further difficulty that "island-centered" history (the desirable goal of regional academic studies) can hardly be divorced from accounts of metropolitan-based enterprises and sources of capital, including the rim countries of the Pacific Basin. I do not think this dependency matters too much for a broad topic whose essential feature is entrepreneurial expansion and interregional financial and human factor flows. But it does mean that some selection within Australian, New Zealand, or American business history of enterprises relevant to the history of Pacific Islanders has to be made; and this imposes an artificial division within the broad discipline of economic history, which is seamless in cyclical themes of growth and decay and only incidentally concerned with parochial island case studies.

There is a third tendency among skilled practitioners of the craft to restrict the definition of what passes for "business history" to meet a stern set of criteria including corporate decision making, profitability measures, technological applications, and backward and forward linkages in local and foreign markets for which there may or may not be records. Judged in this way, even a well-developed historiography of economic enterprise may fail to pass muster according, at least, to one economic historian, who has found New Zealand's business history to be "uncritical, too personalised, focused on trivial details from individual firms and silent on relevant historical and theoretical debates" (Ville 1992:86–102).<sup>1</sup>

This is not the place to debate the merits of company histories for a country whose historians are well able to defend themselves. The more general point worth making is that for the nineteenth-century Pacific few enterprises accumulated archives. Besides the big firms that became limited liability companies subject to law on public reports and disclosure of accounts, there is a larger category of single traders, partnerships, and early joint stock enterprises across the mercantile, plantation, and extractive industries that are topics of generalization, rather than detailed analysis of

performance. However imperfect their record, they cannot be ignored; and by and large they will be the focus of the three main categories treated in this survey: (1) mercantile and staple trades, (2) commercial agriculture, and (3) mining. For reasons that will become clear, the service sector will be subsumed under the first category, though in the postcolonial period there is a strong argument for writing about banking, insurance, and tourism quite separately, especially where they have been treated as part of Australian, New Zealand, American, or other metropolitan studies of the clearing banks and other services. Local studies of construction and manufacturing feature in general economic surveys and country studies by the World Bank and academic institutes, and there are some valuable comparisons of more recent government and private enterprise for this sector in Fiji.<sup>2</sup> But for historical reasons, manufacturing as a category of enterprise is better subsumed under agricultural or mining processing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries until the appearance of light industries in Pacific Island economies.

There are, too, a host of small-scale entrepreneurial activities—and not all of European origin—to be accounted for. Precolonial and nonimmigrant entrepreneurial ventures pose special problems in explanation—not least because of their rarity outside of highly localized exchange systems. Indian, Chinese, and Japanese family business has been recognized, rather than explored in comparative depth, by a few anthropologists and students of ethnic settlement, while economic historians have failed so far to supply explanations of success or failure in enterprises undertaken by contrasting family structures.<sup>3</sup>

Structures matter in business history where it is not sufficient to describe “the history of economic activities” (Bennett 1979:iv; 1987) disembodied from the institutions that undertake the risks of organizing production and exchange.<sup>4</sup> The point is worth making because it is relatively easy to describe the growth of early staple trades in island exchange systems, but it is much more difficult to provide the details of business organization at the metropolitan end of investment and processing, or the staple series needed to measure market growth, or the operational record needed to account for the failure or survival of traders and merchants. Historical series are available for cotton and sugar, as early staples. But they are strangely inadequate for the Pacific’s major export—coconut oil and copra. We now know much more about the market for labor and its recruitment and terms of service in Pacific Islands history than about the market locally and overseas for the staple most commercial smallholdings and plantations employed labor to produce. Pacific historians could still learn something from works on the palm oil and palm kernel trade in Africa and, in particular, from the material

now available on the development of vegetable oil brokerages and processing in England, Germany, and France in the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, much of Pacific enterprise has its origins in the demand side of Europe and America's consumption of raw materials. The account of early business structures in this sector is particularly patchy.

### **Prospection and Partnerships**

This survey begins with alien "big-men" who were the products of American, Asian, and Australian "country trades." This term is chosen deliberately by analogy with the seaboard trade of India in the eastern archipelagoes and the South China Sea. Unfortunately, those who have traveled in the wake of the East India Company have given us precious little information on the structure and performance of chartered Spanish, Portuguese, or French companies in the northern Pacific (Spate 1983:111–113; cf. Chaudhuri 1978). After the end of monopoly ventures the country trades of the eastern seas were open to a wider variety of separate traders and partnerships coupled with the important agency houses, whose structure, services, and example spread well beyond Calcutta and Madras (Jones 1986; Steven 1965:40–41, 100–102, 213, 242; Hainsworth 1968:37, 80, 106, 112–115, 165; Shineberg 1967: chap. 5). The model of the "House of Agency" techniques deployed in early New South Wales trade is quite explicit from 1799; and the reasons for these techniques (warehousing for bulk cargoes and debt collection) continued to obtain throughout the period of weakening East India Company monopoly and the quest for profitable staples to relieve the outflow of sterling bills. These pioneer operations in colonial import-export trades and shipping provide the essential basis for the early "hunter-gatherer" phase of Pacific Islands commerce and the later establishment of shipping networks financed by brokers and wholesalers.

This connection is made (though not always explicitly) in works by Margaret Steven, D. R. Hainsworth, and D. Shineberg, who have explored the operations and effects of staple ventures backed by shippers and wholesalers. Levels of capitalization were not high; operations looked more like mercantile ventures for immediate sale and profit of a staple—shell, hogs, sandalwood—rather than investment in shore stations. We also know that missionary settlers played an important part in the establishment of local market demand in beach communities, rather than as a continuation of established periodic trade routes. In an important sense the Pacific Islands country trade had to establish markets, whereas the East Asia trades used those already existing. Nevertheless, the agency system of the Australian colonies and California was the successor to the eastern system by the mid-nineteenth century.



The important difference between the “hunter-gatherers” and their mercantile successors from the 1850s lay in the invention of the compound steam engine as well as in improvements in raw material processing in Europe and North America. Sailing vessels remained useful for feeder services in the Pacific. But from mid-century the use of steamers on the long-haul routes and the application of a greater scale of capital investment and organization spread throughout the Pacific Basin from mercantile agencies in Queensland, California, New Zealand, and the East Indies. For example, Buckley and Klugman make it clear in their study of the origins of Burns Philp that the partnership took no interest in the Pacific Islands until they had acquired experience in general merchandising and shipping from their bases in Townsville and Sydney. Long after they had exploited the natives of Queensland by domination of the retail trade of the Gulf of Carpentaria, they turned their attention tentatively, and speculatively, to the Gulf of Papua and ventured into pearl diving and a little blackbirding (Buckley and Klugman 1981).

But it is equally clear that the prototypes of Pacific enterprise had other features of Australian, European, American, and Latin American commercial practice. The typical “company” of the first half of the nineteenth century was unincorporated, like its Asian and African counterparts. The partnership form of association by several principals, pooling private and/or borrowed capital, was ubiquitous among British, French, German, and American entrepreneurs in the Pacific and capable of great adaptation. Records are few and precious, before the period of joint stock formation, limited liability, and legal requirements on disclosure from the 1860s. But from the records we have of, say, Burns Philp prior to incorporation, German companies before about 1879, or American firms in Hawai‘i, several features can be discerned that have their parallels in other regions.

One that is not frequently emphasized is the specialization of such partnerships in particular commodity trades and their generalized functions at an operational level in island markets. This pattern would seem to be characteristic of firms in the pioneering commercial phase of Queensland’s development, prior to railways, as it is for Melanesia and Polynesia. Thus, Burns Philp, as a merchandising firm in the 1870s and early 1880s, or J. C. Godeffroy & Sohn, which pioneered merchandising and produce buying by way of Valparaiso from the 1850s, concentrated on the most profitable credit lines in hardwares and textiles, in return for cash, wool, timber (in Queensland), and coconut oil and copra from Samoa to New Guinea and Micronesia. Burns Philp also built up a small coastal fleet and ventured into blackbirding; while for Godeffroy’s a large trading fleet gave a near monopoly of island agency work and bulking facilities. Like other Hamburg firms—Hennings, Ruge, Hedemann, A. Capelle, Eduard Hensheim—they par-



ticipated in the labor trade, as the plantation phase of commercial agriculture developed in the islands from the 1860s. Such firms also undertook services closer to banking, the organization of credit facilities, land sales, and the importation of specie, in the absence of such a sector in Pacific ports. The merchant was a moneylender, and the profitable transport of South American coin into nascent Polynesian markets parallels German importations of cowries into West African markets in the mid-nineteenth century (Buckley and Klugman 1983:118–119, 306, for arguments against credit; Newbury 1980:243–247; Hieke 1949).

The long turnover period between collection, bulking, and final sale of staples accounts for merchant emphasis on high markup on merchandise through credit facilities. But much depended on the ability of island carriers to take advantage of the increased capacity of steamships available by extension of lines from Europe to Singapore and Batavia and the Australian ports. It was not accidental, for example, that Burns Philp took a significant shareholding in the highly subsidized Queensland Shipping Company, which operated Australian and Far Eastern mail contracts in the 1880s, or that the biggest challenge to the Queensland Company came from the combination of Mackinnon, Mackenzie and Company (from their base in Calcutta), and the Australian United Steam Navigation Company. And to these examples one might add the linkage between Claus Spreckels—Californian sugar refiner and creator in 1881 of the Oceanic Steamship Company—and the Hawaiian sugar agencies he took over. In short, the techniques and finance of the Indian and California agencies plus the development of coastal and long-haul lines lay behind the cut-throat war of the second half of the nineteenth century over rates and contracts (assisted in the American case by cross investment from railway companies). Such was the essential background to the second phase of mercantile and agency investment in the south and north Pacific (Jones 1986:139–142; Adler 1966:91, 103; Schmack 1938).

What is suggested here is that Pacific mercantile and plantation development was transport-led from the 1860s and matched the demand for bulk staples. As a further proof one can point to Godeffroy's switch from coconut oil to sun-dried copra, once transshipment by Dutch steamship lines was available in Batavia from 1867, and to the cautious entry from a position of dominance in South Island ports by Union Steamship Company into Suva in 1880 to take advantage of bulk sugar cargoes, followed by rapid investment in vessels specially designed for Pacific conditions (McLean 1990:37–40).

At the beach and plantation end of production and collection, however, the generalized credit function of early partnerships deserves separate and comparative treatment in the history of Pacific business for a number of rea-

sions. Apart from the lien established between merchant and borrower (whether trader, planter, or islander), extensive credit practices introduced rudimentary commercial legal practice through consular courts or occasionally through Australian or California courts. The spread of commercial law is poorly documented in Pacific studies, in favor of a romanticized "frontier" description of trading practices. But examination of more tedious correspondence in consular records—British, French, or American—soon reveals that a search for orderly litigation is one of the outstanding features of the growth of trade and settlement. The political consequences of legal conflict have been better charted than introduced notions of individualized property, mortgage and lease, interest rates, and bankruptcy, which were accepted or contested quite early in Eastern Polynesia, Hawai'i, Samoa, and Tonga (Scarr 1972:104–172; Newbury 1985:225–240; Knapman 1976:167–188). It also needs to be remembered that early Pacific administrations—New Caledonia, Fiji, East Polynesia, from the 1840s to the 1870s—unlike later administrations of the 1880s in territories with banking facilities, were among the indebted clients of merchants who negotiated drafts to meet local wages bills in periods of delayed remittances from Paris, London, or Sydney. A further feature is the restricted level of capitalization available for such ventures and reliance on reinvested profits rather than on further calls on capital or public subscription prior to the 1890s.

This feature requires more extensive documentation than can be given here, and it is fundamental to removing misconceptions prevalent in generalizations about European, Australasian, or American direct investment overseas (Thompson 1971:25–38; Thompson 1980; Rosewarne 1985). In practice (and contrary to received wisdom about the availability of "surplus" capital) it was quite difficult to raise speculative funding for distant ventures except from among those with a specialized knowledge of overseas markets. Consequently, restructuring into larger concerns, which is a mark of mergers and commercial expansion from San Francisco, Sydney, Auckland, Hamburg, or Bordeaux into the Pacific from the late 1870s, as more capital was required, simply adapted elements of the partnership into a legally incorporated company with very limited shareholders. For example, when Burns Philp was incorporated in 1883 with a paid-up capital of £150,000, the two main partners and sixteen employees held most of the shares; at the end of the 1880s there were still only seventy shareholders. Ventures were profitable and paid a dividend limited to 10 percent until 1893, based mainly on sales of merchandise (55 percent) and the rest from shipping and financial services. Similarly, when the German company Société Commerciale de l'Océanie was formed out of Godeffroy interests in the late 1870s, with a limited capital of £116,000, shares were held by the Godeffroy family, the

produce brokerage Scharf & Kaiser, and C. Wilkens of Pape'ete. Tight control among family and associates remained a feature of both the Australian and the German companies and their cautious entry into plantation management, compared with more secure operations in banking, insurance, and shipping. As a result of such incorporations, the measure of profitability becomes more accessible, rather than being buried in partnership papers. Not many Pacific historians have faced up to the problems of accounting, but the few who have provide enough material for a revision of notions of "monopoly" (Knapman 1987: chap. 6; Buckley and Klugman 1983 [for measures of Burns Philp South Seas profits, but not for the parent company]; McLean 1990; Newbury 1980:242–254; Firth 1972; Firth 1973; Rosewarne 1985: esp. chap. 12 and table 9.5, which is unclear on basics such as net, gross, pretax, and posttax profits).

But, as McLean notes (as author of one of the few Pacific business histories to supply profitability measures), "statistics record success; they never adequately explain it" (1990:200). The issue of profitability measures raises the question of why mercantile firms invested in plantations and what the financial advantage was, if any. It may be self-evident that sugar refiners and vegetable oil combines should do so. But they are relative latecomers to Pacific plantations, where the more usual form of investment was undertaken either directly by merchant houses or as a form of subtenancy by planters who were staked by mercantile firms and merchants.

### **Commercial Agriculture**

From studies of plantation agriculture two basic reasons for investment in this form of production emerge. First, with regular steam communications mercantile firms bought land and financed planters in order to ensure supplies of cotton, copra, and sugar for bulking and processing at regular intervals. This is a particular feature of early German land purchases in Fiji, Samoa, and New Guinea; and it was carried over by Burns Philp, W. R. Carpenter, and others into Australian underwriting of plantations in New Guinea and the northern Solomons. Such investment was also a hedge against future land and plantation values and an aspect of agency work. The latter diversification of services is a special feature of plantation management in Hawai'i (to be examined later), but it was present earlier in acquisition of plantations and management by the Société Commerciale in Tahiti and the Leeward Islands. The second reason is the more usual movement by refiners and vegetable oil processors vertically to sources of supply in the Solomons and Fiji (from the United Kingdom and Australia) and between California and Hawaiian sugar production as a movement by producers and agencies into refining.



The literature on mercantile and agency investment in plantations is extensive. The most detailed coverage of commercial agriculture is probably in Hawai'i's history from the 1840s in the wake of the Mahele land sales (1849–1851) and the 1876 Reciprocity treaty, which gave favored entry to Hawaiian sugar. Although the politics arising from those events have been well covered, the business history of capitalization and management of plantations by import-export agencies is less well documented.<sup>6</sup> The aspect of concentration and bulking through Honolulu and many of the social linkages implicit in business relationships between planters and merchants are plain enough. But compared with studies of agency houses elsewhere—in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Zanzibar—many of the operational and financial aspects of this partial merger of interests are unclear. Lacking are detailed accounts of the capital structures and levels of profitability of Brewer's, Alexander & Baldwin, and Castle & Cooke in the older works by Sullivan, Dean, Taylor, and others to match Michael Moynagh's study of the Colonial Sugar Refinery in Fiji (Dean 1950; Sullivan 1926; Taylor 1976; Moynagh 1981). The good news is that the Bishop Museum holds the papers of Theo H. Davies, sugar factor, and those of the Dillingham Corporation; and there are new repositories for the records of the Alexander & Baldwin Corporation and the Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Company. Nevertheless, the history of plantation capital in Hawai'i has serious gaps. It would be interesting to know the details of monopsony agreements, if any, on pricing for raw sugar, on labor recruitment and wages, and possibly on market shares in arrangements with California refiners, in the period before Hawaiian producers and agencies created "C & H Sugar Refining" in 1906. Other features of this concentration follow established patterns: investment in transport and diversification into electricity, banking, Liberty House, and so forth. But so far the detailed history of the mergers and confiscations after 1898 and through the 1930s is lacking and requires a composite study of the Big Five equal to Hawai'i's excellent labor histories.

Moreover, while monocultures attract historians, the diversification that has been a successful feature of Hawai'i's business history has only recently been accounted for in Hawkins's unpublished thesis on the rise of canning and other industries (1986). While this is a valuable corrective, there are still unanswered questions about J. D. Dole's business record or the record of the pineapple cooperative association that only standard analysis of annual returns (if they exist) could answer.

The story, as we have it, of Papua's plantations is even less satisfactory. This is largely because the only attempt to write their history concentrated on a sympathetic portrait of the smallholders and managers, and avoided any analysis of the one complete set of plantation records we have for this area: those of the British New Guinea Development Company, set up in



1910 as a political and commercial speculation with the blessing of Papua's administration by a limited number of Australian and British syndicates, single investors, and a few knighted capitalists (Lewis 1989). Miraculously, it survived (we know not how) until relatively recently. In the case of German New Guinea we are better served, and it is possible to account for the structure of plantation and agency companies during the Australian takeover as a vast rescue operation through the Expropriation Board, with special terms for servicemen-planters set in place by Burns Philp, Carpenter's, and the Commonwealth Bank.<sup>7</sup> By contrast with Hawai'i, what emerges from the business history of commercial agriculture in Papua New Guinea is the failure of copra compared with sugar; the constant introduction of special measures for mortgage relief, mail subsidies, and protected navigation to rescue planters and their mercantile backers as an act of faith or patriotism; and the failure to diversify out of the straitjacket of the Australian tariff system into local manufacturing by processing and exporting through the Far East direct to overseas markets.

The final plantation case study to be looked at briefly here is Moynagh's 1981 work on the Colonial Sugar Refinery, which is in many ways a model business history because of the quality of the sources available.<sup>8</sup> The features that contrast with Hawai'i and Papua, however, reside more in the political influence of the company, its pressure against crop diversification and manipulation of exchange rates, and its strategic withdrawal in 1973 at a favorable moment. Indeed, it has much more in common with other multinationals, as a sugar refinery, using planters in a form of *metayage*, practicing transfer pricing, and expatriating income on a large scale through debatable accounting (Head Office Expenses). Colonial Sugar Refinery, in short, looks more like an extractive industry than an agency for plantations.

### **The Extractive Industries**

Histories of mining in the Pacific range from the romanticism of early alluvial gold in New Guinea to more ephemeral surveys of dramatic development led by some of the biggest conglomerates in the world. We shall have to wait for accounts of the operations of Conzinc Riotinto of Australia (CRA), Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP), Placer, and Ok Tedi Mining Corporation in Bougainville and the Highlands (Nelson 1976; Healy 1967; McGee and Henning 1990; O'Faircheallaigh 1982). So far, the one book we have on Ok Tedi, by W. S. Pintz (1984), hardly takes us beyond the arrangement of contracts. In the meantime we shall have to make do with competent surveys, which have the weakness that they make free with standard measures of company "profits" and "earnings" and the strength that they are good at

seeking out political and banking linkages in Papua New Guinea or New Caledonia (Howard 1991). It is likely, however, that without better access to archives the emphasis will be, as in the past, on the labor content of mining costs and the social consequences, state taxation, and sources of revenue for developing economies. With the exception of some of the phosphate mining histories, very little has been written so far to compare with works on major companies in Australia, Africa, or North America. And work on the Pacific Phosphate Company and the British Phosphate Commission has been particularly disappointing, not to say anecdotal, in its lengthy narrative of events and lack of analysis of business performance beyond export tonnages. It can be argued that the Phosphate Commission was not in the business of making "profits," unlike its predecessor. But that argument dodges several important issues: namely, the acquisition at near-zero cost of phosphate-bearing lands on Nauru; the very high level of profitability enjoyed by the Pacific Phosphate Company, which determined its purchase for £3.5 million (Australian Archives, CP 360/8, Hughes to Watt, 7 May 1919); and the need to provide the cheapest source of phosphates possible for Australian and New Zealand farmers compatible with running costs and miserable levels of royalties. The still unanswered question is how far antipodean agricultural production was subsequently subsidized below world phosphate prices. Only a series worked out from the annual public reports of the commissioners could go toward answering this question (see Williams and Macdonald 1985:273–274 and *passim* for pricing arrangements, but no analysis of performance of what was a nationalized industry).

An exception to these strictures, 'Atu Bain's thesis on Fiji gold mining, is both a model of what can be done with difficult source material and a cautionary tale on measures of profitability for the mines of the Emperor group. Rightly, in my view (with a labor theory of value in mind), considerable space is devoted to recruitment by group engagements, conditions of work, resistance and protest, and the paternalism of the Fijian government toward the companies. The difficulty with this emphasis is that technology and the efficiency of the mines against the background of a fixed and then floating gold price are given little place; the usual measures are missing. It is clear enough that the mines were favored to the extent of subsidies by government, though we are not given anywhere an analysis of labor costs as a percentage of total working costs (I suspect they were low). Measuring profits as a percentage of revenue, moreover, is a strange way of evaluating the performance of the group: it would be preferable to calculate profits as percentages of capital employed or of output (Bain 1993).

However, there are other features of great interest to business historians of the Pacific. One is a clear indication of a mining and merchant lobby

headed by influential businessmen such as Sir Henry Scott and Sir Maynard Hedstrom, whose activities in Fiji await further study. This oligarchy had great political and economic clout, and Australia's relations with the British colony can hardly be understood without work on their influence during and after the colonial period, especially as capital investment was institutionally rather than publicly subscribed (few shares were offered on the Sydney exchange). The second feature is the very light taxation imposed—much lighter than in South Africa or Ghana, for example. One consequence has been the small contribution of gold mining to the Fijian economy; another is the total absence of a local small-shareholder interest. Clearly the topic has not been exhausted; but, as in West Africa, a study of the expatriate business community as a whole in the colonial and postcolonial periods is now called for.<sup>9</sup> A further possibility with parallels elsewhere is an account of Emperor Gold Mines activities in relation to the Alliance Party in patron-client terms, especially after the joint venture with Western Mining in 1983 gave mining interests a greater stake in the stability of the political economy.

An understanding of businessmen beyond the general stereotypes depends, too, on biography and portraits of the Pacific entrepreneur set in perspective. So far the portrait gallery is richer in rogues from the hunter-gatherer phase of commercial ventures than in revealing studies of decision making at the board level for major companies. Fortunately, hagiography seems to be limited to the Doles of Hawai'i.<sup>10</sup> Governors fare better than businessmen in Pacific history;<sup>11</sup> and there are far fewer examples of biographical adulation than in African business history, where Rhodes, Oppenheimer, Goldie, and Mackinnon have had to be revised downward as records have become available. Anne-Gabrielle Thompson's study of John Higginson (once compared with Rhodes) is a useful demonstration of the limitations of the genre as historical explanation in business history, and a warning against taking such speculative ventures as the Caledonian Company of the New Hebrides or the London Globe Mining Corporation (two of Higginson's inventions) at face value. In fact it turns out that he had very little to do with the centerpiece of New Caledonia's economic history—Société le Nickel—as is sometimes supposed. Higginson, like Steinberger in Samoa, was more important for the people he duped than for the firms he founded. He is the best example we have of a Pacific con man whose career yields hardly any information about the structures of plantation, land, and mining companies at an important period of New Caledonia's history—the change from plantations into cattle ranching and mining (Thompson 1982, 1984). More usefully, the work that has been done on white planters in Papua by David Lewis or on Solomon Islands and Tanna trader-planters by Judith Bennett and Ron Adams offers a firmer foundation for a typology of



smallholder enterprise, but not a secure one, I think, for an evaluation of business success or failure (Lewis 1989; Bennett 1987; Adams 1993).

### Conclusions

This survey suggests a number of themes to be followed up in teaching and supervising if the Pacific field for business history is to be compared with other regions or considered in relation to the political and social transformation that has dominated the literature. I think it will be conceded (as it was in African studies a couple of decades ago) that “business” has been unfashionable as an undertaking for the young historian—akin perhaps to consorting with the enemy in an academic climate inimical to “capitalist” business culture (Graves 1980). Now (with an eye to the future job market?) this is less so; and a training in economic history, even an MBA, would not be thought strange for a Pacific historian.

There are limitations imposed by the source material. As in African business history, the content is heavy with “economic activities” such as market trading, land concessions, and the politics of business lobbies, rather than the structure, performance, rise, decline, and economic importance of the enterprise. A further difficulty, more acute in Pacific studies than in Africa or Asia, is the absence of precolonial business, apart from exchange cycles. In Pacific history, on a much smaller scale of accumulation and exchange of surplus, the problem, rather, is to explain the weakness of indigenous entrepreneurial activity in the colonial and postcolonial period. *Bisnis* in the Highlands is not enough, compared with immigrant commerce and real efforts at commercial diversification in Tonga, Western Samoa, and the Cook Islands (Fairbairn 1988; and for the debate on entrepreneurship and remittances: Brown and Connell 1993; Brown and Foster 1994; Munro and Munro 1985; Knapman 1976; Finney 1965). So far, island “capitalism” lacks substantive comparative treatment at all levels of company formation.

For the colonial period, there has been a broad advance, strong on pioneers among the mercantile and planter groups; light on structures, mergers, profitability among the agricultural, forestry and extractive, transport, and banking enterprises of the later nineteenth century and the twentieth century. Sources for banking and the influence of chambers of commerce are not lacking. Perhaps a “Pacific Business Archives Council” is required to pull the references together.<sup>12</sup>

As we come to the end of Pacific empire—or its continuation by other means—one theme calls for examination, namely, the attitude of expatriate and local businessmen toward the devolution of power to local politicians and parties. Historical examination of such attitudes has only recently begun



for Africa. But it has yielded the important result that, on the whole, reactions were tempered by the knowledge that politicians could be managed in the initial phases of independence and that most firms have adapted. In the Pacific the lines of communication used by companies for political ends bypassed much of the formal structure of the local secretariat, in the case of British territories, to gain a hearing in the Colonial Office. For Papua New Guinea there was also a direct route to Melbourne or Canberra, but much more use was made of Commonwealth politicians. For the French territories a vigorous local press, chambers of commerce, and (at certain periods of representative government) the right to argue a commercial case directly with a colonial ministry have left a different set of records.

A second theme raises the more general question of a business as well as an administrative partition of Pacific territories. The question has been explored in the case of the partition of labor supplies in Melanesia and elsewhere, which prefaced formal diplomatic division from 1885. But there is also the much larger carve-up by shipping companies of the trans-Pacific routes and bulk staple markets—an extension of the warfare for the Australasian and American coastal trades. Conversely, the history of rivalry and accommodation for the extension of commerce and services from the “Anglo-Saxon” territories into French-protected areas has yet to be written. Some of this duality of business and diplomacy is summed up in the history of that absurdity the New Hebrides Condominium, which resulted from sustained Australian and French business and religious competition from bases in Melbourne, Sydney, and Noumea. But it is also present in the extension of tourist services, airline concessions, and, in more subtle ways, in the scientific and aid-giving institutions of the postwar period of decolonization (Bates 1990).<sup>13</sup>

Finally, there are larger problems implicit in Pacific business history, as elsewhere. One is whether the archetypal businessman as a risk taker and combiner of the elements of production for profit has really survived into the age of managerial capitalism and the emergence of professionals in the operations of international companies. The topic of business leadership is bound up, moreover, with changes in methods of business finance through direct investment, joint ventures, curtailed repatriation, and complex tax concessions since the 1950s in all parts of the underdeveloped world. Political status matters in this area. Hawai‘i may look like an extension of California or Asian business, but Papua New Guinea and Fiji do not. Nor are they simply an extension of Australian business. What is not always recognized is that the “metropole” as a source for finance is also multinational, less focused on several imperial capitals, and more open to funding through

consortia and less (in the British or Australian case) through the equity market.<sup>14</sup> In the long run, the listing of public companies in Sydney, Melbourne, London, and Paris with interests in the Pacific Islands may look like the exception rather than the rule. The rule at the beginning (and now at the end of empire) was that private finance from banks, mortgage companies, and repatriated profits took the risk in uncertain markets for produce, land, transport, and other services. Nowadays, as earlier in Latin America or Africa, public issues are to governments through banks or international fund holders. The preference in business is for directly managed assets, not portfolio investment from a set of gullible institutions or private punters. Accordingly, since stock exchanges first appeared in Australia in 1871, there has been a rise and decline in South Sea bubbles, to the point where “expatriate” investment is government-negotiated at a diplomatic level with export credit guarantees and hopes of rescheduling later, rather than through the commercial venture at the level of the expatriate trader. That sea change, too, has yet to be accurately charted in the Pacific.

## NOTES

This revised version of papers presented to the Pacific Islands Studies Occasional Seminar Series at the University of Hawai'i and the Royal Society of New Zealand, Otago Branch, in January and April 1995 incorporates numerous suggestions for which I am grateful, including those of the anonymous readers of the submitted manuscript. For a similar exercise, see Hopkins 1976:29–48 and 267–290; and 1987:119–140. Apart from the important omission of South African business studies, these surveys are the most insightful commentary on areas of imperial business and can be read with White 1994, Jones 1992, and Rosewarne 1985 for an indication of directions of research useful for Pacific historians.

1. Ville is correct in that we have had to wait until very recently for an account of the New Zealand Company as a business (see Burns 1989). His judgment can be challenged, however, by the work of McLean on Union Steamship Company (1990), and by older works such as Stone 1973. A concerted effort has been made to collect local business archives: see, for example, checklists of the Hocken Library Extension, Archives and Manuscripts, Dunedin. Both the Australian National University and Melbourne University have considerable holdings of business records.

2. For the postwar period much can be gleaned on sectorial development from World Bank Country Studies (1982, 1988) or from academic institutions specializing in the Pacific area, such as the National Centre for Development Studies of the Australian National University. For business development, banking surveys and company reports as well as the financial press are the most useful indicators of contemporary trends. See, too, Asian Productivity Organisation 1994 for an attempt to tackle the question of ethnicity and business from Fijian examples.

3. Moench 1963 and Wu 1982 are examples of the ethnic history genre without business records. For a different approach, see Faure 1989:347–376. For the beginnings of a vast postwar literature on the problems of island entrepreneurship, credit unions, “companies,” and cooperatives, see Stace 1962 and Epstein 1968.

4. Progression from “hunter-gatherer” to company partnership and joint stock enterprise can be traced in Slack and Clark 1983. No one as yet has worked on the captured records of the Hershman company, and we do not know how successful his earlier partnership with Robertson was.

5. Material relevant to Pacific staples can be found in Leubuscher 1951, in the Customs Ledgers series of the Public Record Office, London, and in territorial Blue Books. See, too, Snodgrass 1928 for bibliography and statistics. A neglected source, apart from Rosewarne 1985, is the Australian Sydney Chamber of Commerce records and consulate records, which provide a continuous commentary on Pacific staples and tariffs from the 1890s.

6. The starting point for plantation business is still the rare work by J. A. Mollett (1961). Business as part of agriculture is notably absent from the essays in Denoon and Snowden 1981.

7. We have little on companies or planters’ performance to compare with studies of labor recruitment and migration. But for the Expropriation Board period, see Hopper 1980; Rosewarne 1985: chap. 6; Newbury 1995.

8. Compare, for example, Chalmin 1985, which also identifies the multinational features of the company.

9. See, for example, S. E. Stockwell 1995; D. K. Fieldhouse 1994.

10. Rare examples outside short portraits in more general studies are J. W. Davidson 1975; Barry Rigby 1973:75–87; Dorothy Shineberg 1971.

11. In this area J. K. Chapman 1964 requires revision for Gordon’s (Lord Stanmore) later business career and connection with the Pacific Islands Company and the Pacific Phosphate Company.

12. For example, the archives of Westpac Corporation (the former ANZ Banking group), Melbourne, are open to researchers; and see the important thesis by Ganjo Yasuo on the Bank of Indo-China (1985), now fortunately translated into French and published by the Comité pour l’Histoire Economique et Financière de la France, Paris, 1993.

13. And see the competing agencies listed in Cassidy 1987.

14. It is possible the investment tide from Australia and New Zealand has ebbed: see the observations on this point by Crocombe 1992.

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## LINGUA FRANCA AND VERNACULAR: LANGUAGE USE AND LANGUAGE CHANGE ON SIKAIANA

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In many Pacific communities, an important element in social change is the changing use of languages. This article describes language use on Sikaiana, a small isolated atoll in the Solomon Islands. Sikaiana is a multilingual community in which three main languages are used: English, Solomon Islands Pijin, and the Sikaiana language. Historical and cultural factors affect the use of different languages in different contexts and no single language is dominant. Pijin, however, is gaining frequency of use at the expense of the Sikaiana language. Pijin is used among schoolchildren, and many young people feel more comfortable speaking it rather than the Sikaiana vernacular or English. Although the Sikaiana language is not likely to be completely replaced by Pijin in the near future, it is under pressure.

FOR MANY YEARS linguists have recognized the importance of studying language use in communities where multilingual speakers use different languages (Haugen 1953; Ferguson 1959; Weinreich 1962). In many multilingual communities one language is more prestigious than others, reflecting political and economic relationships (Ferguson 1959). The languages of colonizers—in the past few centuries these are mostly European languages—come to be dominant over local languages. In some newly created nations, regional lingua francas emerge reflecting new nationalistic identities (see Anderson 1991). Sometimes, dominant languages have overpowered local languages, resulting in the loss or “death” of the local language, as young speakers lose fluency (Dorian 1981, 1989). The self-conscious preservation

of local languages, for example, the recent efforts among the Hawaiians and the Maori, may reflect the desire to preserve a separate identity in protest of foreign economic and political institutions.

These processes of language change and replacement are at work in many of the small societies in Oceania. Local vernaculars are under extreme pressure from *lingua francas*, including various regional pidgins and English (see Kulick 1992a:5–8; Romaine 1992:8; Wurm 1991; Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo 1991:553). In this article, I will examine the use of different languages among the Sikaiana, a Polynesian people from a very small and geographically isolated atoll located in the Solomon Islands. I will describe the local factors that shape decisions about language use (see Kulick 1992b; Jourdan 1991a:202–203).<sup>1</sup>

My interest in language use on Sikaiana is derived from a broader research interest concerning the manner in which a regional culture and social system are developing in the Solomon Islands and the manner in which local communities, such as Sikaiana, are maintaining, redefining, or replacing their indigenous traditions and practices. Four different languages reflect these international, regional, and local influences. First, English was the language used by the British colonizers of the Solomon Islands. English remains the official language of the government and schools, although it is not spoken fluently by most Solomon Islanders. Second, Solomon Islands Pijin is a regional *lingua franca*, related to Tok Pisin of Papua New Guinea. Pijin is the main language in the Solomon Islands for informal communication between different ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup> Third, Mota, a language from the Banks Islands in Vanuatu, was originally used as a *lingua franca* by the Christians who missionized Sikaiana and is still spoken by some elderly people. Fourth, the local vernacular is a Polynesian language.<sup>3</sup> Almost all Sikaiana people are bilingual in Pijin and Sikaiana.

For the Sikaiana people, decisions about language use depend on values and attitudes associated with each language in a particular context. No single language is clearly dominant across all contexts; rather a confluence of historical, cultural, and interactional factors shape preferences for using different languages in specific contexts. There are some factors, however, that increase the use of Pijin. Pijin is not a prestigious language, but people rarely lack confidence in speaking it. In contrast, people are criticized for mistakes in both English and Sikaiana, and such criticism can inhibit the use of these languages. Pijin also gains momentum because there are high rates of migration from Sikaiana to other parts of the Solomon Islands where Pijin is the *lingua franca*. Although these factors do not yet “tip” the vernacular toward rapid extinction (Dorian 1981:51), they do “tilt” language use toward Pijin.

## Background

Sikaiana is located about one hundred miles east of Malaita Province in the Solomon Islands. The Sikaiana are Polynesian and have cultural and historical relationships with other Polynesian societies. Over the past sixty years, the Sikaiana people have incorporated outside institutions, practices, and technology into their social life. These new practices include Christianity, formal education, courts, and labor for wages. At the same time, the Sikaiana people have developed indigenous institutions that preserve a distinct ethnic and community identity (see Donner 1987, 1992, 1994). During my fieldwork periods of 1980–1983 and 1987, Sikaiana had a resident population that fluctuated between 200 and 250 people; about 400–500 other Sikaiana people were living and working in other areas of the Solomon Islands. From 1897 to 1978, Sikaiana was administrated by the British within the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. When the protectorate became independent in 1978, Sikaiana became a separate administrative “council area” or “ward” within Malaita Province. The capital of the Solomon Islands is located at Honiara on Guadalcanal. The Solomon Islands is a diverse nation that consists of over sixty different language groups (see Tryon and Hackman 1983), among a population that at the last complete census in 1986 was approaching three hundred thousand.

Sikaiana has a long history of contact with Europeans. During the nineteenth century, its population had a reputation for being hospitable and it was a popular stopping place for traders and whalers. Visitors in the mid-nineteenth century reported that some of the population could speak “broken” English (Schertzer 1861:602; Webster 1863:51–52; Anonymous 1848:575). In the late nineteenth century, Sikaiana was incorporated into the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. By the early 1900s, visitors’ accounts report that some of the population was speaking Pijin, the emerging lingua franca of the Solomon Islands. Although Sikaiana was not heavily recruited as part of the notorious “blackbirding” trade, there was steady, albeit sporadic, interaction with European traders.<sup>4</sup> There were European beachcombers and occasional resident traders in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By this time, manufactured trade goods were essential in the atoll’s economy: tobacco, steel tools, flint, flour, and even tinned beef were available at several different locally managed stores that were supplied by European traders. Moreover, Sikaiana men were recruited to work on trading and government vessels.

In 1929 the (Anglican) Melanesian Mission sent missionaries to Sikaiana.<sup>5</sup> In the 1930s there was a very rapid and almost complete conversion to Christianity. Starting in 1930, many younger people left Sikaiana to attend



mission schools located elsewhere in the Solomon Islands, usually with the encouragement of Sikaiana parents who wanted their children to learn how to read and write. In the early 1930s, the language of instruction in these schools was Mota, an Oceanic language used by the Melanesian Mission as its *lingua franca*.<sup>6</sup> There are prayer books, hymns, and sections of the Bible translated into Mota. Later, the Melanesian Mission changed its language of instruction to English. Outside of the classroom, despite school policies discouraging its use, Sikaiana pupils learned Solomon Islands Pijin.

Since World War II, increasing numbers of Sikaiana people have left the atoll for education and employment. The number of Sikaiana people has almost tripled between 1900 and 1980, but the number of people resident on the atoll has remained approximately stable at about 200–250. About two-thirds of the present-day population has emigrated away from Sikaiana, although most of these emigrants try to maintain close ties with the atoll. Following World War II, children of emigrants matured in towns, especially Honiara, Yandina, and Auki, where Pijin was the primary means of communication with other Solomon Islanders. Sikaiana migrants living in and around Honiara maintain close ties with each other, cooperate in fundraising activities, encourage marriages among their children, and participate in festive events (see Donner 1992, 1993).

The present-day Sikaiana population is very mobile, and people frequently move back and forth between Honiara and Sikaiana. Many Sikaiana emigrants take their yearly leaves on Sikaiana. It is not uncommon for people to live for several years on Sikaiana, leave to work for wages for several years, and then return again. Sikaiana is the home of last resort for people who have lost their jobs or are retired. Cash is less important on Sikaiana than in towns, and it is easier to live on local resources.

In the following discussion, I will describe language use among the Sikaiana, including both those residing on the atoll and those who have emigrated to Honiara. The Sikaiana people form one speech community, and most of them reside in these two locations. This article focuses on situations in which Sikaiana people are interacting with other Sikaiana; interactions with people from other ethnic groups in the Solomon Islands usually take place in Pijin.

### Overview

As discussed above, there are four main languages used by the Sikaiana: Mota, English, Pijin, and the Sikaiana language. These languages are inter-related. Both Pijin and Sikaiana are constantly influenced by borrowing English words and morphology. At least some of Pijin's grammatical features are derived from Oceanic languages (see Keesing 1988).<sup>7</sup>

English is the official language of the Solomon Islands, and government documents are written in English, including those documents pertaining to institutions affecting the daily life of Sikaiana such as the cooperative store, the clinic, the court, and the government council. The government's educational policy, moreover, establishes English as the official language of instruction in public schools (see Keesing 1991; Jourdan 1991b; Romaine 1992:339). Pijin, however, is the usual language for communication between government administrators and local officials when conversing and conducting government business. A few well-educated Sikaiana men claim that they "think" in English (rather than Pijin or Sikaiana). Most of these men have spent long periods abroad in schools and nations where English is the main language for communication and now work in professional occupations where it is used frequently. Ability in English varies. Many Sikaiana can read and understand some English, and a few people are completely fluent and literate. Spontaneous conversations in English are very infrequent among the Sikaiana, although Sikaiana men try to speak English when they are in drunken quarrels.

All Sikaiana men and almost all women (excepting some of the eldest) are fluent in Pijin. In 1987 on the atoll, there were only eleven adults (all women) who described themselves as unable to speak Pijin (in a total population of 236). Most of these women were born before the arrival of missionaries in 1929; the youngest of these women was born before 1935.<sup>8</sup>

Some people who attended schools in the late 1950s and early 1960s claim that they learned English in schools before they learned Pijin. Formerly, Melanesian Mission schools discouraged the use of both Pijin and vernaculars, and many of the mission's teachers spoke English as a first language. Eventually, the government established a national educational system, replacing most of the mission schools, and now most teachers are not native speakers of English. At present, both on the atoll and in Honiara, people learn Pijin before English. Many Sikaiana people assert that this impedes their mastery of English.

Within the last twenty years, Pijin use has increased. One Sikaiana schoolteacher told me that when he started teaching in 1976 at the primary school on Sikaiana, none of the children could speak Pijin, but that by 1981 (the time of that interview) most children were fluent in it. In 1987 Pijin use by youngsters was more pervasive on the atoll. I was surprised when young children of five and six years, who had been raised on the atoll, used Pijin with each other in spontaneous conversations (such conversations in Pijin between young children were rare in 1980–1983). In July 1987 I did a survey on language use on the atoll and found that there were only two children older than six who were described by their parents or guardians as unable to speak Pijin.

In Honiara, Sikaiana children learn Pijin before attending school. In the Honiara household where I lived in 1987, a young boy of about three was a gregarious speaker of Sikaiana but was just beginning to understand, although not speak, Pijin. His six-year-old sister was bilingual, using both languages with adults and peers, as were all other children older than her in the household. The teenagers and young adults in the household spoke to one another almost exclusively in Pijin. Mature adults communicated to one another in a mixture of Pijin and Sikaiana.

Adults and older children usually used Sikaiana to very young children when they were beginning to speak. Children, however, learned Pijin before starting primary school. When I returned to the Solomon Islands in 1993, the three-year-old boy described above was about ten and held almost all conversations in Pijin. By this age, children have considerable exposure to schoolmates from other linguistic groups and speak to them primarily in Pijin (see also Jourdan 1991b:169–170). A young preschool child of about three whose parents were living with this same family in 1993 always spoke in Pijin, although he could understand some Sikaiana.

Parents do not restrict their children's use of the Sikaiana language or encourage the use of Pijin. If anything, parents prefer that their children learn Sikaiana and English. But both on Sikaiana and in Honiara, Sikaiana children learn Pijin from other children, and this gives the language momentum.

Many young adults, especially males who were raised in Honiara, speak to each other very frequently in Pijin and often claim to be uncomfortable speaking in Sikaiana. There is a frequent assertion that the Sikaiana spoken by younger people is "incorrect." Often younger people told me that they could not understand the Sikaiana speech of their elders.<sup>9</sup>

Young adults residing on the atoll mixed their speech between Sikaiana and Pijin (many of these younger people had only returned to Sikaiana recently after living elsewhere for an extended period). Most informal conversations among mature adults residing on Sikaiana were conducted in the Sikaiana language. In Honiara, Pijin is used more frequently in conversations.

Mota is not used frequently and is known only to old people who studied at the mission schools in the 1930s. These elderly people sometimes use it to write letters and for silent prayer. It is used in conversations when older people do not want younger people to understand them.

In 1987 I conducted interviews with eighty-two Sikaiana people concerning language use.<sup>10</sup> All those interviewed were fluent in Pijin and Sikaiana, and sometimes in other languages. As a general measure of attachment to language, I asked interviewees which language they "think" in. I have grouped responses under three headings: those residing on Sikaiana, those residing in Honiara, and finally a total combining both groups. Not infre-

TABLE 1. Languages That People Think In

Language	Sikaiana		Honiara		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sikaiana	18	60	17	33	35	43
Sikaiana-Pijin mix	5	17	8	15	13	16
Pijin	5	17	16	31	21	26
English-Pijin mix	0	0	2	4	2	2
English	1	3	4	8	5	6
Mota-Sikaiana mix	1	3	0	0	1	1
Other mix	0	0	5	10	5	6
Total	30		52		82	

quently, people replied that they used several different languages, and these responses are recorded in Table 1.

My initial interview questions assumed that only one language would predominate, but the large number of people who replied that they think in different languages reflects the degree of integration of these different languages into daily life.<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, there is a definite shift away from using the Sikaiana language toward using Pijin and English among the residents of Honiara.

Speakers describe their ordinary speech as “mixing” both Pijin and Sikaiana. (In Sikaiana, they describe this with the phrase *talatala hakasoaso*, from *hakaso*, which means “mix, especially of liquids.”) One longtime Honiara resident explained to me that he spoke in one language until he came to an idea that could be better explained in the other and then switched languages, and then switched back to the first language when a similar situation arose again.<sup>12</sup>

As part of the interviews, I asked individuals which language they use when talking with specific alters. Most people claimed that they make an assessment about their listener’s or their audience’s ability and then use the language that they consider to be appropriate for the listener. Some younger people claimed that certain older alters feel more comfortable using the Sikaiana language and that they use it when speaking to them, while older people claimed that they use Pijin so younger people can understand them. Many people assumed their command of languages was better than the alter’s. When I interviewed the same alters in separate sessions, they sometimes did not agree in describing which language they use with one another, but they did agree about the factors that determine their choice of language. For example, several times a younger informant would tell me he spoke in



Sikaiana with an older alter because the alter was more comfortable speaking in Sikaiana. Later, when I interviewed this older alter, he claimed to speak in Pijin with the former informant because the former had trouble using Sikaiana.

### **Contexts for Language Use**

In present-day Sikaiana society, several important social contexts are derived from Western institutions. Language use in these contexts is affected by the history of the introduction of these institutions and Sikaiana understandings about these institutions.

#### *Schools*

The Sikaiana are highly committed to formal education and encourage their children to stay in school as long as possible. Formal education is equated with opportunity and financial success, especially important since the atoll does not have the resources to support the entire Sikaiana population.

English is taught at all levels of the government school system but is taught most effectively at the secondary level (only the best students are admitted to secondary schools). In 1987 parents told me that instruction in Honiara primary schools is supposed to be in English but that normally it is in Pijin. Among students, who come from many different ethnic groups in the Solomon Islands, Pijin is the primary language for informal conversations. In Honiara this use of Pijin by classmates is probably one of the greatest pressures that tilts the language use of Sikaiana children toward Pijin.

Sikaiana primary school teachers on the atoll told me that they usually use Pijin or a mix of Pijin and English in their instruction. The Sikaiana teachers emphasized that they felt it was important to encourage the use of English as much as possible during the school time. They added, however, that because of their own lack of ability in English, they often used a mix of Pijin and English in instruction. The teachers know many English terms that are not normally used in colloquial Pijin speech; however, they find English grammar difficult.

#### *Meetings*

The Sikaiana frequently hold meetings to build a consensus for various community activities. Public meetings on the atoll are conducted in the Sikaiana language, including general community meetings, meetings of the govern-

ing council, the school committee, the custom committee, and the committee that oversees the cooperative store. Meetings involving outside government representatives or religious officials who visit the atoll are conducted in Pijin when these visitors are non-Sikaiana.

In 1987 in Honiara there were frequent meetings of two committees: a disaster committee, organized to help the atoll recover from a cyclone; and a sports club named Vania, whose membership included most Sikaiana emigrants living in Honiara (see Donner 1992). Meetings of both committees were usually conducted in Pijin. The disaster committee was composed of younger people, many under forty, who felt more comfortable conversing in Pijin than in Sikaiana.<sup>13</sup> In 1987 I attended two meetings of extended families in Honiara concerned with preparations for a traditional activity, a wedding exchange (*penupenu*). Both meetings were conducted in Pijin, although I considered everyone present to be fluent in Sikaiana.

In 1980–1983 most meetings in Honiara were conducted in the Sikaiana language. In part, the increased use of Pijin in 1987 at these meetings can be attributed to a demographic factor: by 1987 the first generation of people raised away from Sikaiana (those born after 1945) were approaching middle age and becoming more influential in community matters, and many of them prefer to use Pijin.

### *Court*

In 1980–1983 and in 1987, land and criminal court cases involving mature adults in the Sikaiana local court were usually conducted in Sikaiana and testimony was transcribed in Sikaiana. In several cases, however, the justices used Pijin when younger males were defendants. These younger people claimed that they had difficulty understanding the Sikaiana language and preferred that the proceedings be conducted in Pijin, although the testimony was transcribed in Sikaiana. In 1982 during one major land case, some testimony was given in English and Pijin because the person representing one of the litigating lineages claimed that he had been away from Sikaiana for so long that he felt more comfortable using these languages. A translator was provided who translated this litigant's arguments and questions into Sikaiana for witnesses and the court.<sup>14</sup>

In court cases, language can be used to express differing identities. The young male defendants are usually being tried for some minor misbehavior. Using Pijin to older justices demonstrates rebelliousness toward the proceedings and the authority of the justices. From the view of the justices, the lack of understanding of the Sikaiana language reflects a lack of understanding of Sikaiana cultural traditions, which results in improper conduct.

### *Church*

On Sikaiana, church services are conducted twice a day and are well attended. Bible readings, liturgy, and prayers are all conducted in English. Hymns are sung in English. Some hymns translated by missionaries into the Sikaiana language are sung at Christmas; they are rarely sung at other times.<sup>15</sup>

In 1981, at the suggestion of visiting church officials, the daily Bible readings were followed by translations into the Sikaiana language (although there was no translation into Sikaiana when I returned in 1987). During my stay in 1980–1983, the priest rarely gave sermons. The one sermon I heard was delivered in the Sikaiana language. In 1987 a new priest and a new catechist, both from Sikaiana, gave regular sermons in Sikaiana every Sunday, although the priest claimed that he would have been more comfortable giving them in Pijin (he had spent most of his adult life away from Sikaiana). In 1987 the Sunday school teacher told me that she taught her classes in Pijin. Most of the Sunday school songs are sung in English (with some interference from Pijin in their performance). One young Sikaiana man had converted to the Seventh-day Adventist religion and was trying to convert other residents of the atoll. His Sunday school classes were conducted in Pijin. He had been raised away from Sikaiana but also probably found it easier to explain Seventh-day Adventist religious beliefs in Pijin, the language in which he learned them.

Some sections of the Bible have been translated into Pijin, but several people told me that they do not like to hear scripture read in Pijin, because they consider it to be too colloquial, and I never heard it read in Pijin during my stay. So far as I know, no Sikaiana person owns a Pijin version of the Bible, although almost every family has at least one copy of an English version. Visiting officials from the Church of Melanesia delivered their talks and occasional sermons in Pijin but read from an English Bible in the church services.

Table 2 is based on another interview question, about which language is used for silent prayer. People prefer to pray in Pijin or English rather than in Sikaiana. Although a total of 43 percent of the respondents said that they “think” in Sikaiana, only 13 percent use it for silent prayer; only 6 percent said that they “think” in English, but 28 percent said that they use it for prayer. The preference for Pijin and English in prayer is probably a result of the fact that most exposure to Christian concepts is in English. People use Pijin in silent prayer for similar reasons. Although it seems to be too colloquial for Bible reading, it offers people the opportunity to use English terms. Many people learned religious concepts at mission schools in English.

TABLE 2. Languages Used for Silent Prayer

Language	Sikaiana		Honiara		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sikaiana	8	27	3	6	11	13
Sikaiana-Pijin mix	5	17	8	15	13	16
Pijin	4	13	16	31	20	24
English-Pijin mix	0	0	4	8	4	5
English	8	27	15	29	23	28
Mota-other mix	5	17	1	2	6	7
Other mix	0	0	5	10	5	6
Total	30		52		82	

The preference for Pijin in prayer is probably a result of the fact that it incorporates the English lexicon, and some people remain unsure about the legitimacy of Sikaiana religious terms. Some older people who learned Mota in mission schools use it in prayer.

Most Christian concepts were translated into Sikaiana words by the missionaries, but there is still disagreement about the accuracy of these translations. Most likely the glosses were developed by the Solomon Island missionaries who first converted the Sikaiana in the early 1930s. These missionaries were members of an indigenous religious order, the Melanesian Brotherhood, or Tasiu, and several were native speakers of other Polynesian languages in the Solomon Islands (see Capell 1935–1937). It is also possible that some translations and glosses were developed by pupils while at mission schools located elsewhere in the Solomon Islands. Nevertheless, the Sikaiana people do not seem to be satisfied that these translations properly convey Christian concepts.<sup>16</sup> During my stay in 1987, there was considerable interest in translating the Bible into the Sikaiana language, in part supported by the efforts of foreign Bible translators who were developing Bible translation projects among other Polynesian speakers of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

### *Guitar Songs*

In the 1960s some young men learned to play the string guitar, and soon this became a popular form of song composition for young people (Donner 1987). Many tunes are taken from English school songs and cassettes. Guitar songs were being composed and were quite popular during both my stays, in 1980–1983 and in 1987. The songs usually recount events or themes that are



important for the Sikaiana people: transgressions of social norms, family arguments, love affairs, and departures from the atoll are common themes. Songs about Western occupations and institutions are rarely composed.

The Sikaiana people are proud of their ability to convey metaphoric or hidden meanings through their language. The use of metaphors (*hulihulisala*) was an important part of traditional song composition and remains important in contemporary song composition for the guitar. Metaphors are used in songs to convey secret meanings understood only by the composers and the people to whom the composers explain their meanings, although others are free to suspect or infer the songs' meanings. Figurative speech is also used in ordinary conversation to convey hidden meanings or enrich conversation. I very rarely heard this type of metaphorical speech used by Sikaiana speakers speaking in Pijin.<sup>17</sup>

Song composition is a medium in which younger Sikaiana people can still express distinctively Sikaiana concerns and events. Many younger men claim to be more comfortable speaking Pijin but when they compose songs, they always do so in Sikaiana. Thus, song composition is an area of Sikaiana life in which the Sikaiana language is an important medium for communication, even among the younger people who claim to be more comfortable speaking Pijin in most other social contexts.

### *Literacy*

The most widely read book among the Sikaiana is the Bible, and most families have a copy of an English version. Portions of the Bible and liturgies were translated into Mota, but none of these are currently in use on Sikaiana.

People also read comics, magazines, and some books in English. In addition, people working in administrative positions read handbooks that are written in English, and read and write reports in English. English permeates all areas of present-day Solomon Islands life, including schools, radio, videos, Western rock and popular music, magazines, and newspapers. When a group of women bought a cake mix, they followed the baking directions on the box, which were in English.

Although Pijin is the lingua franca of interethnic spoken communication in the Solomon Islands, throughout the 1980s there was no standardized orthography of Pijin that was taught in schools. Linguists working on a Bible translation project, the Solomon Islands Translation Advisory Group, proposed standardized spellings for some words, but this orthography did not have wide acceptance.<sup>18</sup>

The Sikaiana language does have an orthography, which was introduced by the missionaries, and many Sikaiana people use it in writing letters. It

TABLE 3. Languages Used for Letter Writing

Language	Sikaiana		Honiara		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sikaiana	10	33	17	33	27	33
Sikaiana-English mix	7	23	15	29	22	27
Pijin	0	0	1	2	1	1
Pijin-other mix	4	13	7	13	11	13
English	4	13	8	15	12	15
Mota-other mix	4	13	3	6	7	9
Never write	1	3	1	2	2	2
Total	30		52		82	

seems to have been comparatively easy to develop an acceptable orthography for the Sikaiana language. One older person told me that he had learned to write in Sikaiana before the arrival of the missionaries: a Hawaiian immigrant had written Sikaiana syllables in the sand along the beach using Hawaiian orthography.<sup>19</sup>

Much of the population has emigrated away from Sikaiana, and there is constant letter writing between people living away and people on the atoll. These letters are often written in the Sikaiana language, which most people can read and write. Not infrequently, however, people write to each other in English. In several cases, people whom I had never heard speaking English wrote letters to other Sikaiana in English. I found the English in these letters sometimes to be awkward, but usually it was understandable.

Table 3 shows the results of a question from the interview about language use in letter writing. Some people claim that they write in English or in the Sikaiana language (or, in a few cases, in Mota), depending on their correspondents: they write in Sikaiana for people with less formal education and in English for correspondents with education. Pijin is not popular for writing, probably because there is no standardized orthography or tradition of using it. Many people who write letters in English, however, also use some Pijin expressions and syntax.<sup>20</sup>

### Attitudes toward Language Use

Most older Sikaiana people lament the perceived condition of the Sikaiana language: the loss of vocabulary, the use of English borrowings, and younger people's incorrect usages. These laments about language use are generally framed in terms of how Sikaiana is also losing its traditional cultural prac-

tices. At the same time, there is a common notion that English possesses many advantages over the Sikaiana language. Skills in English are associated with formal education, employment, economic advancement, access to new technology, material goods, and ultimately one's standard of living. Many people associate English with success and sophistication.

Sometimes people told me that English was a better language than Sikaiana for expressing things. Often it was asserted that one Sikaiana word meant many different things. This polysemy was taken as a sign that the Sikaiana language lacked the specificity found in English. My response that the reverse was also true—some Sikaiana words are more specific than their English gloss—usually met an indifferent reception. It is also assumed that Christian religious concepts, which are very important on Sikaiana, are clear in English but not as they have been glossed into the Sikaiana language.

The Sikaiana sometimes have a self-deprecatory sense of humor in comparing their cultural traditions with Western traditions, and this extends to their language. While I was working to define patterns in Sikaiana grammar, several different informants told me that there is something wrong with the Sikaiana language that makes it impossible to describe its grammatical rules.

Most people view the Sikaiana language as an important part of their traditional heritage, but they also want to have the opportunities and knowledge that they associate with English. Many believe that the Sikaiana language will change and become simplified over the next few generations. For the most part they do not like this situation but see little they can do about it.

Although English is viewed as a prestigious language, Pijin is not. People complain that Pijin is too limited, that it interferes with learning English, and that it is difficult to use as a written language. People encourage the use of Sikaiana and English; I have never heard anyone encouraged to use Pijin. However, Pijin is much more accessible to speakers than English and offers the opportunity to incorporate and use the large English lexicon.

Attitudes toward language use also provide Pijin with an ironic advantage that encourages its use: people are not criticized for how they use Pijin. Sikaiana is a small-scale community where criticism and gossip are important regulators of behavior. The people are self-deprecatory, but they are also sensitive to criticism from others. In their language use, people are criticized for improper usages in both Sikaiana and English but not in Pijin. Older people are often critical of how younger people use the Sikaiana language. There is also criticism of some older people who left Sikaiana when young and assertions that they never mastered the language properly. Younger people often say that they lack ability in speaking Sikaiana.<sup>21</sup>

There is also some reluctance to use English, often because of a similar lack of confidence. Moreover, people who use English with other Sikaiana

in informal settings can be ridiculed for being pretentious (see Dorian 1981:103 for similar examples among Gaelic speakers).

But I never heard anyone criticized for the way they spoke Pijin. Older people may criticize younger people for speaking Pijin instead of Sikaiana, but they do not criticize the manner in which it is spoken. Pijin is a language that seems to be taken for granted. It is assumed that young people will learn it and use it to its fullest potential for expressing themselves. By contrast, both Sikaiana and English are considered to be more difficult to master, and there is a notion that some people will not learn to speak these languages properly. Very rarely did anyone talk about lacking confidence in Pijin.

### **Discussion: Historical and Cultural Factors in Language Use**

A variety of factors shape language use on Sikaiana, including certain historical factors affecting the introduction and use of different languages, local attitudes and ideologies about languages, and specific circumstances surrounding the learning and use of languages.

The decision by Anglican missionaries to use Mota and later English as their language of instruction resulted in the development of English as Sikaiana's main literary and religious language. While some Sikaiana worshipers are willing to use Pijin in their silent prayers because it incorporates English terms, many consider Pijin too colloquial for religious services. Pijin, moreover, is an ineffective language for literary communication because there was never any systematic effort to establish a standardized orthography. In Papua New Guinea, Lutherans and Catholics used Tok Pisin as their language of instruction, providing it with an orthography and much more viability as a written language (see Romaine 1992:47–51). Generally, Papua New Guinea governmental policies have been more supportive of Tok Pisin than those in the Solomon Islands toward Solomon Islands Pijin (see Keesing 1991; Jourdan 1991b; Romaine 1992:339).

In examining language use in multilingual communities, it is also important to examine the attitudes or ideologies that develop about different languages and how these affect language use (for a review, see Woolard and Schieffelin 1994).<sup>22</sup> Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo show how the use of the vernacular in religious services among Kwara'ae members of the Church of Melanesia reflects their greater commitment to a traditional identity compared with the Kwara'ae members of the South Seas Evangelical Church, who use English and Pijin in their services and are more oriented to change and modernization (1991).

In some communities the vernacular is stigmatized and a dominant



regional language can be part of a new and valued identity. In a detailed study of language use in Gapun, a small Papua New Guinea community, Kulick found that speakers associate Tok Pisin with access to valued Western goods and success, and Tok Pisin is replacing the vernacular as the main language (1992a, 1992b). For the people of Gapun, Tok Pisin is the language of intelligence and sophistication, and the local vernacular is devalued.

Among the Sikaiana, there is more ambivalence about culture change and there is a more complicated pattern of language use. The social change associated with Western contact is both desired and feared. The loss of traditional practices is decried but the Sikaiana actively participate in the institutions that replace and undermine traditional practices. They are enthusiastic to participate in and manage institutions such as the church, schools, and courts. They value education and the employment opportunities that it offers. Earlier generations enthusiastically converted to Christianity and sought employment for wages. Today many people follow world events with interest on radios, and those living in Honiara watch videos and some communicate with fax machines. At the same time they try to maintain their traditional culture and practices. They hold events that maintain the distinctness of their community, including wedding exchanges, song and dance festivities, and a variety of fundraising activities. Many Sikaiana people also lament what they perceive to be the loss of a former harmony. They say that without the need to earn money and the influence of foreign practices, people in previous times were less contentious and happier.<sup>23</sup> This ambivalence about culture change is reflected in a complicated linguistic situation in which no language is clearly dominant across all settings and contexts.

Finally, on Sikaiana there is differential exposure to languages, and as a result people differ in their competencies in the various languages. Lack of confidence and criticism about usage can become perpetuating factors that limit the use of some languages. For the Sikaiana people, this situation ironically enhances the use of Pijin at the expense of the two more prestigious languages, English and the vernacular.<sup>24</sup>

### **Conclusion: The Tilt toward Pijin**

There are many publications about how dominating cultural systems, especially those derived from Western societies, are affecting local life in Oceania. But there are relatively few discussions about how dominant languages, especially colonial languages and pidgins, are affecting local language use. Speakers of other languages in the Solomon Islands have told me that language use in their home communities is affected by factors associated with modernization and change. I believe that this issue deserves much

more attention than it currently receives. Further study will provide insight into processes shaping both linguistic change and sociocultural change (see Kulick 1992b).

On Sikaiana, there is a pastiche of language use that reflects both the general conditions in the Solomon Islands and particular elements in Sikaiana life. Mota and English were used as languages of instruction by missionaries. Pijin has not been promoted as a written language, whereas Sikaiana has a developed tradition of being used as a written language. There are high rates of emigration away from the atoll to Honiara, where Pijin is the *lingua franca*. English is the official language of instruction in Solomon Islands schools, but Pijin is the main language learned in primary schools. These factors result in a diversity of language use, where, for example, Pijin and Sikaiana are the main languages for informal conversations; English and Sikaiana are preferred for writing; Pijin and English are preferred for prayer; and Sikaiana remains preferred for expression in certain indigenous contexts, such as guitar song composition.<sup>25</sup>

There is, however, a definite shift to using Pijin, which reflects both general and local processes in culture change and language use. Pijin offers its Sikaiana speakers several advantages. It is a language that can be used for communication with other Solomon Islanders and is used in most of the regional and national institutions that pervade Sikaiana life. Moreover, Pijin can now also be used for successful communication with most other Sikaiana people. Sikaiana people are directly exposed to very few people who are fluent in English, whereas Pijin is much more accessible in their daily lives. As used by the Sikaiana people, Pijin allows for the incorporation of a large body of English words without the problems of mastering English syntax. Pijin is the language of schoolyards and youth, important for communication in peer groups. Finally, it is a language that younger people can feel they have mastered. Belonging to no one and to everyone, Pijin has no experts who criticize how it is used. Pijin is the language of those who do not want to be considered clumsy for their imperfect use of the language of their elders and ancestors, or pretentious in their awkward use of the remote language of the elite and of foreigners.

## NOTES

1. The research for this article was conducted from October 1980 until July 1983 and from March 1987 to September 1987. I also spent a few weeks with Sikaiana migrants living in and near Honiara in 1993. Although language use was examined in 1980–1983, language change was not a specific research topic during that period of research as it was in 1987. I am a fluent, but not flawless, speaker of both Sikaiana and Pijin. I cannot speak Mota. American English is my first language.

2. For relevant discussions of Pijin in Melanesia, see Jourdan 1991a, Sankoff 1980, Keesing 1988, and Romaine 1992.

3. In a study that compared the material culture and language of the Polynesian outliers, Bayard wrote about Sikaiana: "primary settlement came from Ellice; secondary settlement took place from LUA [Luaniua], PIL-TAU [Pileni-Taumako] and/or other central atolls. Fairly extensive Micronesian contact has taken place, as well as contact with the Southern Solomon Islands, PIL-TAU [Pileni-Taumako] and perhaps RE [Rennell]" (1976:53).

The Sikaiana claim that they have trouble speaking Luaniua, but they learn it rapidly when they stay among Luaniua people. Irwin Howard told me that he could converse with Sikaiana people based on his knowledge of Takuu in Papua New Guinea (pers. com., 1980), and his lexicon of Takuu looks very similar to Sikaiana.

In a comparative review of Polynesian languages, Pawley has classified Sikaiana as part of a Samoic-Outlier grouping of the Western Polynesian languages. He suggests that the languages of Tuvalu and the Northern Polynesian Outliers may form a separate subgroup within the Samoic-Outlier group. Within this subgroup, Takuu, Luaniua, and Sikaiana show strong affinities as one subgroup, as opposed to Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro, which form a separate subgroup (Pawley 1966, 1967:260). Howard has argued for a separate Ellice-Central-Northern Outlier ("Ellicean") subgrouping based on lexical items that are distinctively shared among these languages (1982).

4. In the late nineteenth century, there was extensive labor recruitment, or "blackbirding," of Solomon Islanders to work in Queensland. The center of the blackbirding was nearby on Malaita, but there does not seem to have been any extensive recruiting on Sikaiana (see Price and Baker 1976).

5. The Melanesian Mission later became the Church of Melanesia.

6. For examples of the use of *lingua francas* by missionaries in New Guinea see Sankoff 1980:120–122.

7. For some younger speakers, mostly those residing in Honiara, Solomon Islands Pijin is their first and primary language. This may constitute a creolization of Pijin, but the distinction between "pidgin" and "creole" is more complicated than many writers have assumed (see Jourdan 1991a).

8. These findings are based on self-reported responses made during a census of the population on Sikaiana in July 1987.

9. Niko Besnier claims that older people's assertions about the linguistic incompetence of younger speakers often underestimate the younger speakers' competency (pers. com., 1987). Indeed, when they are asked to give specific examples of language change, the very same, and minor, examples of improper usage are often cited. For example, people frequently point to younger people's use of *koukou* for *kaukau* 'to bathe' as evidence of the sorry state of the Sikaiana language.

Certain grammatical features have been leveled by younger people. Like many Oceanic languages, Sikaiana has a common verbal suffix, *-Cia*. This suffix has been variously described as a "transitive," "passive," or "ergative" marker in various Polynesian lan-

guages (see Clark 1973; Pawley 1973). -C represents a consonant that varies depending on the word, and on Sikaiana -Cia yields the forms -hia (*laka, lakahia*), -kia (*somo, somokia*), -lia (*honu, honulia*), -mia (*anu, anumia*), -nia (*poo, poonia*), -ina (*talatala, tala-talina*), -sia (*tani, tanisia*), -tia (*aloha, alohatia*), -ia (*pakupaku, pakuia*), and -a (*haele, haelea*). Younger speakers have leveled most of these forms and tend to use -lia to replace most of the above suffixes (*lakalia, anulia, alohalia*).

Some young people substitute the “source” marker, *i*, for the “agent” marker, *e*.

Among all speakers, but especially among younger speakers, there is a loss of Sikaiana vocabulary, especially in areas of technology and ritual that are no longer practiced. Younger speakers, moreover, often substitute Pijin and English borrowings where, in my opinion, there are adequate Sikaiana equivalents.

Some of these changes are examples of the type of leveling found in many languages and can be attributed to the internal dynamics of the Sikaiana language rather than to improper use by younger people.

10. Parts of the interview were derived from Dorian’s interviews (1981). I conducted the interviews myself. The sample was not determined by random statistical methods: on certain days I set out and interviewed whomever I happened to encounter. Those interviewed included twelve women and eighteen men on Sikaiana, and twenty-two women and thirty men in Honiara. Women are generally more conservative speakers than men, although the responses of both sexes exhibit similar patterns of mixing languages and shifting language use in different contexts. There were twenty-seven people born before 1940, twenty-three people born between 1940 and 1960, and thirty-two people born after 1960. I admit that these are crude measures of language use and that it cannot be inferred that there is an absolute correspondence between self-reports about language use and actual language use. But these results correspond with my observations, and I feel confident that they convey both the complexity and the shifting patterns in Sikaiana language use.

11. I am not claiming that Sikaiana people are processing two different codes simultaneously. Rather, the large number of people who claim to think in more than one language reflects the fact that they feel quite familiar with several languages.

12. I did not do any extensive, systematic analysis of code-switching. I did notice that there is switching between the languages to add emphasis. For example, a mother whose commands in the Sikaiana language are ignored by her children will repeat the command in Pijin to add emphasis; at a meeting a person will repeat a statement in the other language to add emphasis or make sure it is understood (see Kulick 1992a:78–80; Sankoff 1980:34–45).

13. Once the disaster committee called a meeting of the Sikaiana people residing in Honiara. The chairman of the committee, a younger male raised in Honiara, began speaking in Pijin. When elders insisted that he speak in the Sikaiana language, he began stumbling, claiming inability, and another member of the committee took over the presentation. The speech of this latter man included many English borrowings that, in my opinion, could have been explained just as well in Sikaiana. During the meeting, many questions were asked in Pijin. A committee member replied in Pijin to a question asked in Sikaiana. It is possible that my presence as an anthropologist known to be interested in language change motivated the people at the meeting to demand that the Sikaiana language be used. In the



case of the Vania sports association, Pijin may have been used because the association's secretary, although the offspring of Sikaiana-speaking parents, was raised on Luaniua (an atoll several hundred miles from Sikaiana) and claimed he had difficulty speaking in Sikaiana (he spoke in Luaniua with his mother).

14. I have a cassette of this litigant speaking fluent Sikaiana, recorded in 1967 by Peter Sharples as part of his linguistic fieldwork on Sikaiana. The litigant, however, had been married to a non-Sikaiana wife, and it is possible that he did not use Sikaiana extensively for many years.

15. The use of English in prayer may also provide religious activities with an aura of mystical power. In traditional Sikaiana society, ritual activities often used a specialized vocabulary not fully understood by many people.

16. A missionary translation of Bible passages into Sikaiana confused the language's agent and object markers, thereby, in one notable mistake, describing the crucifixion of the Romans (see Capell 1935–1937, 45:16).

17. See Monberg's discussion about songs from Bellona for similar uses of metaphor (1974).

18. In 1993 I found that Pijin was starting to be used in a few instances as a written language in Honiara. There was some use of Pijin in advertising and public health signs, and there was a public exhibit in Honiara with captions in Pijin that explained the environmental problems associated with logging.

19. Vowel length and geminate consonants are not marked in the orthography used by the Sikaiana, although they are aware of these distinctions in speech. The Sikaiana people speak of both sound contrasts as "heavy" versus "light" or "slow" versus "rapid." Phonemic distinctions in vowel length usually correspond with stress patterns. Thus, *taku* 'my' with stress on the *a* is contrasted with *takuu* 'axe' with stress on the *u*. Geminate consonant clusters often occur in reduplicated syllables in which the initial unstressed vowel is deleted (*vavale* → *vvale*). Some Sikaiana people did not like it, however, when I wrote the language in a manner that reflected these length distinctions. There are no standardized conventions for representing certain morphological features. For example, affixes, such as the causative prefix *haka-*, can be written as separate words or combined with other terms to form one compound.

20. For a discussion of literacy in another small Polynesian society, see Besnier 1991. Besnier shows that Nukulaelae (Tuvalu) writing, which is focused on personal letters and church sermons, should be understood as an indigenous expressive medium.

21. Whether or not these assertions about improper usage by younger speakers are accurate, they have consequences in terms of younger people's reluctance to use the Sikaiana language. As W. I. Thomas stated in his famous theorem, "If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928:572).

22. Elsewhere I have described how encountering foreign cultures made the Sikaiana people much more self-conscious about their own culture (Donner 1993). In a similar

manner, using different languages makes them more self-conscious about language use, and people can develop attitudes about the advantages and disadvantages of certain languages. Moreover, just as culture can become a political issue, for example, in the various uses of tradition or *kastom* to achieve present-day political and social goals (see Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Jolly and Thomas 1992; Lindstrom and White 1993), so, too, can language use have political and ideological implications.

23. I discuss the incorporation of foreign activities and maintenance of indigenous activities at greater length in other articles (Donner 1992, 1993, 1994).

24. It seems likely that this could be an important factor in the manner in which some languages “tip” rapidly toward a loss of speakers (see Dorian 1981, 1989).

25. It is difficult to predict the future of language use on Sikaiana. Mota will be lost as a language among the Sikaiana when the current generation of elderly speakers die. The Sikaiana language will probably be used at least for several more generations. Pijin is gaining at the expense of other languages at present, but it is possible that Pijin itself may in several generations be replaced by or converge with English.

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## THE JULY FESTIVAL IN THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS: "YOUTH" AND IDENTITY IN A VALLEY COMMUNITY

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This article documents the 1977 July festival (called the *Rare*) in one valley on 'Ua Pou island in the northern Marquesas Islands. The article focuses on the *Rare* as a liminal period in which Marquesans explored a range of energetic, desire-laden, and romanticized alternatives to everyday ways of life, but then emerged from the festival with a renewed appreciation of the sensibleness of everyday ways of life. Events of the *Rare* also served to mark and facilitate transitions from one life stage to the next. During this period of intense social contact and public visibility, people both experimented with and stabilized social categories. Statements regarding what it meant to be an "errant youth," a "dependent child," and a "responsible adult"—and the advantages and disadvantages of each life stage—were acted out on the social stage that the festival provided. The *Rare* and daily life have changed much since the fieldwork period, reflecting changes in economics, political identity, and access to technologies. A cultural revival has led to the reintroduction of Marquesan dances and chants into the festival and to changes in political identity. However, the deep valuing of the sensibleness of everyday ways of life and the process of reexamining and reconfirming these ways through participation in festivities that turn normal life "on its head" continue.

THE *TIURAI* (Tahitian for "July," from the English) festival is celebrated throughout French Polynesia. It is both a local event, celebrated by residents of an island or smaller community, and, at Pape'ete on Tahiti, a spectacle reflecting territorial politics. Some aspects of the festival are standard in all locales, owing to inputs from the French territorial government (such as the provision of prizes for canoe races and dance competitions). But many aspects (such as the duration of the festival, its activities, and its social

dynamics) vary across locales and change across time. The festival is a highly visible, public event that reflects the political, economic, and social concerns of the people involved.

This article documents the 1977 July festival in one valley on an island in the northern Marquesas Islands. People from three adjoining valleys celebrated the July festival (which they called the *Rare*) together. The article documents the social, economic, and psychological processes observed and relates these to Marquesan social and psychological beliefs. It focuses on the *Rare* as a liminal period in which Marquesans explored a range of energetic, desire-laden, and romanticized alternatives to everyday ways of life, but then emerged from the festival with a renewed appreciation of the sensibleness of everyday ways of life. Events of the *Rare* also served to mark and facilitate transitions from one life stage to the next.

Hanson describes the July festival in Rapa, Austral Islands, as a stage for intervillage rivalry (1970). The youth of two nearby villages compete in canoe and boat races, soccer matches, and door-to-door dance performances. Rapans in the two villages organize festival participation differently, reflecting their preferred social organizational styles. People from one village formalize whole-village cooperation, while residents of the other prefer spontaneous, loosely structured cooperation. The effectiveness of each style is tested symbolically during the festival, and residents of each village point out the weaknesses of the social strategies of the other. In the process Rapans explore their range of social organizational possibilities.

Stevenson has shown how the *Tiurai* in Pape'ete, Tahiti, provides a context for display and elaboration of Tahitian arts and tradition distinguished from French culture and political history (1990). (The festival used to begin on Bastille Day but now begins on the date when French Polynesia was given to France.) Stevenson compares the depiction of Tahitian cultural identity in July festivities to *kastom* in Melanesian areas and to various traditions that have been analyzed recently as focusing on national identity (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Keesing 1989; Linnekin 1983, 1990).

Marquesans are a small minority in French Polynesia. Their language remains distinct from Tahitian, unlike that of other outlying areas in the territory. Marquesans speak and understand Tahitian to varying degrees, and Tahitian is the language of worship for Marquesan Protestants, but Marquesans view themselves as quite different from Tahitians.

In the Marquesas, during the fieldwork period of 1975–1977,<sup>1</sup> the *Rare* was an event of and for “young people,” rather than a stage for ethnic identity, political identity, or intervalley rivalry. During the ten- to fourteen-day festival, the culturally valued qualities of youth (beauty, grace, sexual dis-

play, skills in dancing and singing) were put on display. During this time *taure'are'a* (Tahitian for "errant youth") activities, such as wandering, socializing, drinking, and loss of sexual inhibitions, were sanctioned for young people and adults. During the same festival period, however, Marquesan adults frequently noted the wastefulness of these activities. *Taure'are'a* qualities and activities were set against a background of adult work, responsibility, and economic know-how, as adults tried to make a profit by running concession booths. Statements regarding what it meant to be an "errant youth," a "dependent child," and a "responsible adult"—and the advantages and disadvantages of each life stage—were acted out on the social stage that the *Rare* provided.

The festival was a period of extreme social complexity and visibility. About half the valley members moved down to the schoolyard, by the sea, where they camped out in the back of small concession booths. People spent a great deal of time watching and gossiping about each other under these cramped conditions. In part, they discussed and refined definitions of life-stage characteristics and evaluated whether these applied to specific individuals. During this period people both experimented with and stabilized social categories.

Information was gathered through systematic observation, participant observation, filming of the process, and interviews with people at different life stages. As houseguests of the teacher, my husband and I lived on one edge of the festival grounds and about thirty feet from the center of activities. The specific questions I sought to answer were

1. How are life stages socially defined during the *Rare*?
2. How are children, *taure'are'a*, young adults, and settled adults talked about?
3. What forms of social pressure are applied to deal with behavior that is not stage appropriate?
4. What forms of transition pressure are applied to encourage children to move up to the *taure'are'a* status, to encourage teens to move into young adulthood, and to encourage young adults to stabilize in responsible ways?
5. What forms of social pressure are applied to encourage people who have slipped back into less mature ways to return to their more mature ways?

The *Rare* and daily life in general in this valley have changed much since my fieldwork period, reflecting changes in economics, political identity, and access to technologies. In 1977 none of the artistic and athletic



activities enjoyed during the festival were Marquesan in origin. "Traditional" group dancing, for example, was primarily Tahitian. Since the time of the fieldwork, a cultural revival—originally encouraged by the Catholic Church—has led to the reintroduction of Marquesan dances and chants in the *Rare*, and political identity has changed considerably (see Moulin 1996 for a description of this change and for discussion of the role of cultural borrowing in the development of political identity in the Marquesas). In spite of these changes, the themes that emerged during the observed *Rare*, I argue, remain integral to Marquesan social, economic, and psychological concerns.

## **Ethnographic Background**

### *Setting*

The Marquesas Islands are located two thousand miles southwest of Hawai'i and about nine hundred miles northeast of Tahiti. In 1977, more than five thousand people lived on the six inhabited islands (the most recent, 1988, census reports 7,358 inhabitants). 'Ua Pou, the site of this study, is a high, volcanic island, without a coastal plain or encircling reef. Its steep valleys are separated by rugged ridges. Life within most valleys was self-contained at the time of the fieldwork since travel between valleys was difficult.

The valley described in this article had about two hundred inhabitants. Many of the twenty-five houses were built on steep slopes, set back from a loop path that ran upland on one side of a stream and then down to the sea on the other side. Near the rocky shore, the schoolhouse, the flat schoolyard, a concrete bridge, and a boat ramp served as public spaces and were the sites of the *Rare* activities.

This settlement was dispersed, with houses set back from the major path, facing away from each other. Marquesans stated that normally they valued distance between themselves and their neighbors, allowing some freedom from others' observation and potential criticism.

### *Normal Daily Life*

Normal daily life was organized around work for the household. Men and adolescent boys left in the early morning to go fishing in outrigger canoes. Women and adolescent girls cleaned house, washed clothes, prepared breadfruit, worked in the garden, and, on some days, wove pandanus, ironed, or fished from shore. Children got themselves up in the morning,

made their own breakfasts, did light chores, looked after infants, and went to school. (Older children and some adolescents were away at the main valley boarding schools.)

By late morning men and teens returned from fishing, children returned from school, and the family ate lunch in their cookhouse. The children played for a while, then returned to school until 3:30. Adults and teens sat, talked, or slept for a while and then worked in the upland gardens or did jobs around the house.

Adults and teens finished work by late afternoon, showered, sat and talked in neighborhood groups, or went down to the public areas by the sea to play or watch volleyball. Adolescents and young adults played volleyball while children played on the bridge, in the stream, or in the sea. At dusk, family members returned home, showered, and ate a light meal.

In the evenings, children played in or near the house, read, did homework by kerosene lamp, and listened to the radio. Adults talked and listened to the radio. Children went to sleep at dark with little coaxing. Adults followed soon after. Adolescent males often gathered in public areas to play ukuleles, sing, and talk. They reportedly snuck around the valley, climbed into girls' houses, or met girls in prearranged places to have sex.

### **The *Rare***

The July festival was a liminal period in which normal spatial, temporal, and social relations were disrupted. People enacted, examined, and redefined everyday expectations and then returned, at the end of the *Rare*, to similar, prefestival forms but with increased appreciation for their sensibleness.

The festival was supported in French Polynesia by the territorial government for the stated purpose of perpetuating Polynesian cultural forms such as traditional group dancing and singing. The government subsidized the festival by providing prize money for competitions in dancing, singing, canoe racing, booth decorating, and tugs of war. The festival lasted from seven to fourteen days, depending on the supply of goods. At the time of my fieldwork, it began on Bastille Day, July 14.

The observed *Rare* was an important economic, social, and cultural event. During the daytime adults tended concession booths, from which they sold each other food, liquor, sweets, and carnival games; prepared goods to sell; and wandered from booth to booth, eating, drinking, watching, and chatting with neighbors. At night, dance groups performed organized Tahitian group dances, youth sang, and youth and adults danced, Western style, to taped contemporary music. American rock, Tahitian sentimental,

and French romantic music blared throughout the festival period from a tape player run from a noisy generator.

### ***Rare Daily Activities***

In the early morning adults emerged from the small living sections at the backs of the concession booths, having had only a few hours' sleep. Music still blared, but even the hardest *taure'are'a* had gone home to sleep. Men and women prepared food for selling that day. One morning a man slaughtered a pig, salted some of the meat, and sold some to neighboring booth owners. Women and men cooked breadfruit and sweet potatoes and pounded *popoi* (the staple food made from fermented breadfruit paste and mashed, roasted breadfruit). When children awoke, they were sent upland to the houses to bring down more goods for the booths. Adults rearranged their displays and prepared coffee and bread to be sold.

Once preparation work was done, people either tended their booths or wandered from booth to booth chatting with their neighbors. Children grouped together in the middle of the schoolyard. They sat on the rocks there, chatted, played string games, and watched adult and adolescent social happenings. Children played mainly with their siblings, cousins, and neighborhood friends. At the beginning of the period, family and neighborhood play groups were preserved. By the end of the festival, children had mingled more and had made some new friends. The *Rare* provided first opportunities for many toddlers to play away from their mothers. They played with their siblings in the schoolyard and on the bridges as their mothers watched from their booths. After the *Rare* these mothers felt more confident letting the toddlers leave home with siblings to come to this area to play.

Women spent the afternoon watching and socializing. Many men began drinking heavily by late afternoon. *Taure'are'a* boys woke up and the noise and activity level picked up. Singing groups formed near the coffee and drinking booths. Families decided where each of their members would eat and with what money, and children went off to buy evening coffee and bread.

After dusk, people took showers back at their houses and changed clothes. On nights when Tahitian-style group dance competitions were held, members of the dance groups put on their costumes and performed on the bridge. A panel of judges determined the prizes. After the performance, *taure'are'a* boys changed into dress shirts, shoes, and long pants, and girls put on long skirts or dresses. These contrasted with informal daytime wear (shorts, T-shirts, and rubber sandals or bare feet). The contem-

porary music (which had been playing constantly throughout the day) was turned up and people began to dance, Western couples-style, in the central area.

Children, young *taure'are'a* who did not want to dance, and young women with babies sat on the sidelines and watched. Older people watched from their booths. Girls who wanted to dance clustered by one booth and talked to each other while waiting to be asked. Boys asked girls to dance shyly in the early evening but more boldly as the night continued. When not dancing, *taure'are'a* boys clustered by another booth where they talked, sang, and laughed.

Young married couples, in transition between adolescence and settled adulthood, occasionally quarreled about whether they should dance. Sometimes, when one person did not want to dance, the other sought a partner among the adolescents, resulting in jealous arguments. Marquesans reported that fights often break out between jealous teenagers as well, but none was observed during this *Rare*.

Daytime activities focused on responsible adults. Children, teens, and old people watched as settled adults worked to keep the businesses running and the families fed. *Taure'are'a* boys kept a low profile during daylight hours, avoiding work and catching up on their sleep. Nighttime activities, in contrast, focused on the young people. Adults and old people sat back behind their concession booth counters and watched and discussed the young people at play. Children watched and teased from the sidelines.

Days and nights continued like this for ten days. Valley members experienced a marathon of sleepless nights, exhausted work, intense social contact, continuous drinking, singing, dancing, and gossiping, and the constant blare of music. *Taure'are'a* were constantly on display during this period—in the daytime as lazy shirkers, at night as shining youth. But settled adults also watched and gossiped about each other. Smoldering conflicts surfaced, and the community worked on some of its dormant problems. By the end of the period, most people wanted to return to quiet, private, everyday life. Some Marquesans claimed that one function of the *Rare* was to get intense sociality out of their systems so that people could return to more mundane lives with contentment. Similarly, Hanson reports that many Rapan families retreat to uninhabited valleys immediately after the intense sociality of the New Year's festival (1970).

The *Rare* was a liminal social event during which people pulled out, examined, discussed, reevaluated, and reshaped their social understandings. Living spaces, time schedules, rhythms, and relationships were temporarily scrambled and then returned to normalcy at the end of the festival.



### Spatial Features: The Festival Grounds

During the festival the active members of about half the families moved down to the small schoolyard by the sea, where they camped out in the backs of tiny, thatched concession booths (see Figure 1). Old people stayed at home with the youngest children to watch the houses. Relatives or friends from other valleys were invited to stay at the houses as well. This particular year, fourteen of the twenty-six households built small concession booths (about six feet by ten feet). The front of each booth was a concession stand; the back, a sleeping area. The booths were arranged to form four sides of a square, facing inward, leaving a large open area in the middle. In this arrangement people tending the booths could watch what was happening at all other booths and in the open area. This arrangement mirrored the way guests were seated in a large square at Marquesan parties. In this configuration, each person could see all others but was able to talk with only the two or three closest people. During the *Rare*, as at parties, people spent most of their time watching and commenting on each other and, in particular, on the "errant youth."

The valley was reconstructed on a small scale on the festival grounds. The arrangement of booths reflected the normal neighbor and kinship solidarity groups (Figure 1). Neighboring households 3, 4, 5, and 5a, for example, all built their booths under the same roof, as did neighboring households 14, 15, and 16. Booths by the schoolhouse and fence in the upper left of the schoolyard were also built among kin. These families cooperated with each other during the festival in an exaggeration of their cooperation in everyday life.

The physical setup of booths and living spaces brought about (1) intense social contact, as people lived in cramped quarters with few possibilities for privacy and shared utilities; (2) the need for new social rules to deal with the intensity and complexity of day-to-day contacts; (3) increased social visibility; and (4) increased social gossip. In this open courtyard arrangement, people became both actors and commentators for the ten-day period. Family arguments and conflicts between neighbors often came to a head and were acted out in full view of other valley residents.

One night, for example, members of a three-generational family began to argue. The settled couple (in their late thirties and with several children) yelled at each other and at the wife's parents, with whom they had been living up in the valley. They had to yell to be heard over the blaring music, and their actions were dramatically backlit by their propane lantern. The husband threw a beer bottle at his wife and in-laws, and the wife reciprocated by throwing a cake. Most of the rest of us sat and watched this long-

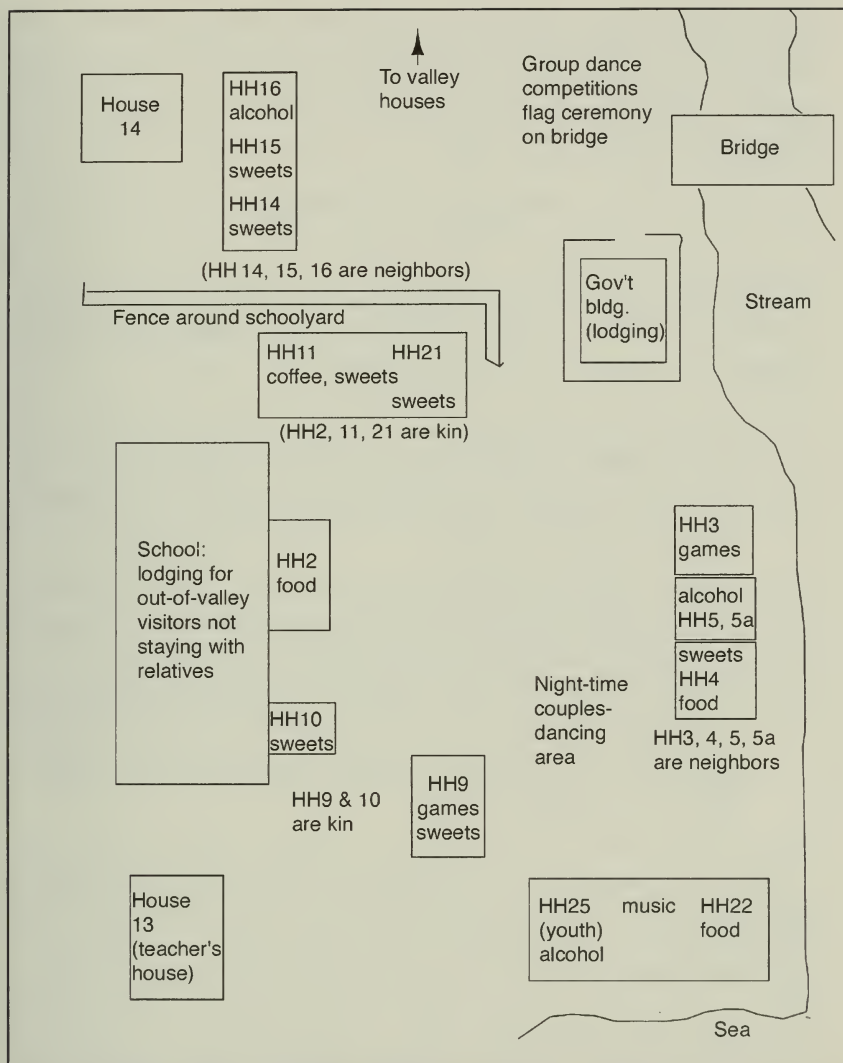


FIGURE 1. July festival area, showing concession booths (HH = household running booth).

brewing fight from the other side of the festival square, as if at the theater. The woman involved later said she felt safer to have this argument in full visibility rather than in the privacy of their isolated valley home. Some Marquesans claimed that the *Rare* served the function of bringing to a head conflicts that had brewed too long.

### Exaggerated Life Stages

Another feature distinguishing this period from everyday life was the intensification of age roles. The roles of adults as economic providers, of *taure'a-re'a* as agents of beauty, grace, and abandon, and of children as insatiable dependents were accentuated in several ways:

- Parents needed to provide cash for their offspring to eat during this period, underlining their roles as providers and clarifying the dependency of children and teens. This contrasted with everyday life in which food was gathered and prepared, with little use of money, and eating was taken for granted;
- Adults worked hard during this period to prepare goods to sell to make a profit. They worked in full view of children, teens, and old people, rather than away at sea or in their upland gardens;
- Children and teens became insatiable during the festival period and constantly asked for money for sweets or drink. Parents freely passed out whatever money they had made, accentuating their indulgence. At the time of my fieldwork, money, sweets, and alcohol were unlikely to be available every day.

The role of *taure'are'a* youth as objects of beauty, grace, and sexual display was highlighted and exaggerated. Tahitian-style dance performances were taken seriously; young people were supposed to dance correctly and well. This accomplishment was in contrast to children's group dancing, which was supposed to be funny and cute, and "old" people's dancing, which was supposed to spoof *taure'are'a* forms. Some pressure was put on young people to dress well, especially at night. Comments were also made that encouraged them to wander, socialize, drink heavily, and have sexual encounters. If they did not manage to stay up all night dancing, they were not true *taure'are'a*, and adults told stories of when they were young. Yet if they worked for their families less during this period, they were upbraided for being irresponsible. Adults gave particularly mixed messages at this time.

The role of children as insatiable dependents was exaggerated during the *Rare*. Parents both complained about and facilitated this pattern. Of the fif-

teen concession booths eight specialized in pastries or sweets, which adults rarely ate and which were uncommon in everyday meals. Booth owners claimed that these foods were easiest to prepare and sell, but they also knew that Marquesan parents had trouble saying no to young children, so their profits would be high (though most booth owners also had demanding young children of their own who spent their profits). People complained about the lack of “real” food (fish, starches, and fruit) during the festival, but spoke warmly of the *Rare* as a time when children begged money from their parents.

Children also provided entertainment during the festival. Parents talked at length about children who cutely mimicked adult or adolescent activity, or who pointed out adult foibles. The children’s dance troupe, for example, performed the same dances, described by Marquesan adults as associated with sexual desire, as did adolescent and young adult dancers. But the children did so with confidence and swagger, while adolescents did so self-consciously, with great embarrassment. Children were not expected to know what they were doing and were not seen as demonstrating their sexual interests, as were the teens.

Children’s roles as adult irritants were also stressed. For example, during the tedious booth-building phase, children took up playing homemade whistles and drums. The hard-working parents could neither escape nor stop this noise, which children kept up for days. Children were also observed pulling out the decorative flowers that their parents had woven into the booth walls.

### Life Stages and Differential Participation in *Rare* Activities

During the *Rare*, many individuals’ transitions from one life stage to another were sped up or formalized. Some transitions were temporary and exploratory, such as when one young adult filled a vacant slot in the “old people’s” dance troupe and another young adult tried to run a concession booth. Those people reverted to their earlier stages at the end of the *Rare*. Many transitions pushed ahead during the festival, though, were lasting, as when young children transitioned into the middle-childhood dance group or when older children moved up to *taure’are’a* status.

Table 1 provides a summary of the valley population categorized according to social stages and household roles (for a somewhat different approach to life stages, see Kirkpatrick 1983). Table 2 shows assignments of the same people to age categories as marked by their participation in specific *Rare* activities.

Assigning individuals to specific age categories was formally accomplished via the formation of dance groups. Three groups were formed in



TABLE 1. Valley Population by Life-Stage Category

Female	Male	Total	Life-Stage Category	Life Stage
9	4	13	1. Infants and toddlers: 0 to 3 years	Children ( <i>toiki</i> )
7	17	24	2. Preschool children: 2 to 5 years old	
27	32	59	3. In-valley school children: 5 to 12 years old	
15	6	21	4. Away at school in large valley, primary school: 10 to 14 years old	
8	2	10	5. Away at secondary school: 13 to 18 years old	
3	8	11	6. Out of school, live at home: 14 to 22 years	
1	7	8	7. Live in adolescent households: 16 to 26 years	
1	6	7	8. Away from the valley for work or military service	
3	2	5	9. Young couples: oldest child less than 6	Young people ( <i>poi'hou</i> , <i>taure'are'a</i> )
9	10	19	10. Settled couples: oldest child almost adolescent	
5	7	12	11. Quite settled couples: oldest child adolescent	
4	4	8	12. Very settled couples: oldest children settled	
5	3	8	13. Old people: all children grown and settled	Adults ( <i>enana motua</i> )
				Old people ( <i>kokoua</i> )

many valleys on this island: a *taure'are'a* group, which was primary and was seen as the most skilled, aesthetically pleasing group; a children's group, which was expected to mimic adolescent dances; and a settled adults' group (called the "old people's" group), which mocked the seriousness of *taure'are'a* display. The makeup of these groups (see Table 2) reflected norms for defining the features of children, adolescents, and adults.

The males in the *taure'are'a* group consisted of unmarried, unsettled youth who had left school. Thirteen-year-old boys who had left school were immediately incorporated into this group, and group dance participation served as a form of initiation rite. The new boys typically danced in the least visible, back rows of the group and learned by following the people in front of them.

TABLE 2. Participation in July Festival Activities by Life Stage

Life Stage	Children's Dance Group		Adolescent Dance Group		Musicians and Singers		Nighttime Dancing		Concession Booth Owners	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Couples	Male
1. Infants/toddlers										
2. Preschool										
3. In-valley school	2									
4. Away at primary school	8	5	2			2				
5. Away at secondary school	1	2	5			8	1			
6. Live at home			3	8		3	5			
7. Adolescent households					4		7	1		
8. Away										
9. Young couples					1	1	1	2		
10. Settled					2	3	2	5	5	
11. Quite settled					1		1	1	5	
12. Very settled									3	
13. Old people										

Note: Numbers represent individuals observed to participate in the activity.

The *tamure* dance, in which a boy and a girl danced in the center of a circle of dancers, moving in ways that Marquesan adults interpreted as related to sexual attraction and desire, was difficult for shy adolescents. Initiation was particularly focused on this dance. Young adolescents balked in dancing this but were hooted and jeered at during practices until they complied. Some young *taure'are'a* tried to reduce embarrassment by performing these dances in a slapstick way, but this practice was discouraged by the group.

An upper cut-off age was apparent in this group, but followed relational patterns rather than absolute age differences. Specifically, boys who had been in the group for a couple years and who now had younger siblings in the group tended to leave and join the transitional musicians' groups. Some older adolescent boys still danced, whereas others made up the group of young men who played guitar, ukulele, or drums and sang for these performances. Criteria for being part of the *taure'are'a* male group, in this sense, involved leaving school yet not being so old as to have several younger siblings in the dance group. Fourteen- or fifteen-year-old boys who had not left school were considered less mature and were not included in this dance group. Two boys, in fact, danced in the children's group. Leaving school was an important criterion for male entrance into the *taure'are'a* period.

Girls who had not yet left school, in contrast, *were* included in this group, and even two elementary school girls were considered *taure'are'a* for dance purposes. The upper limit for girls excluded those who were living regularly with a boy. Other exclusions were made on the basis of physical appearance. For example, one girl was excluded because she was not thin enough, while another had a slight foot deformity. These exclusions were not verbalized as such, but when asked why the particular girls were not in the group, such reasons were given.

The children's dance group was made up almost entirely of main-valley, boarding school children home for vacation. There were also three secondary school children who danced in this group, in the front rows. Two precocious primary school girls (eight-year-olds) were bumped up into the *taure'are'a* group, as mentioned earlier.

The "old people's" group (when it was formed) consisted of settled adults—both couples with children not quite adolescent and older couples whose children were *taure'are'a*.

Specific behaviors were expected of each group:

- The *taure'are'a* group was expected to perform seriously, with grace and group coordination. Emphasis was on the realness of this display, and clowning was discouraged. Adults often expressed dissatisfaction

with *taure'are'a* dancing. They said it lacked grace, coordination, and enthusiasm. Adolescents were often seen as holding back.

- The children, in contrast, were to have fun dancing. They were encouraged to mimic adolescent and adult activities wildly. The children performed dances associated with *taure'are'a* display and desires with little inhibition. These behaviors and desires were not seriously expected of them in real life, and they could be free in their renditions. The spontaneity and exaggeration of children's dancing made it the audience favorite.
- Settled adults whose own children were adolescents were expected to mock the seriousness of grace and sexual desires performed by their children. They portrayed themselves as worn-down, experienced adults. In general, aesthetic seriousness was placed on *taure'are'a* display, whereas children and adults were encouraged to mimic or mock the valued forms.

The musicians' group contained young adults in transition. It was made up in part of older adolescent males who lived in their own "young people's" house and in part of married adults whose own children were approaching adolescence. These adults were seen as harboring their last *taure'are'a* thoughts.

A further life stage, that of quite settled adults (parents of several children) and of very settled adults (parents whose oldest children were adolescent or older) provided most of the booth owners and workers of the festival. One unmarried male and one young couple tried to run booths this year, but failed miserably as the older adults had predicted. Only the older owners managed to make a profit, since younger adults immediately spent their money on alcohol. Older people had the capital to buy the needed goods, the patience to do the work, and were more careful spenders.

Participation in Western nighttime dancing was indicative of one's life stage. Couples dancing was considered to be for graceful *taure'are'a*. Some young, married couples danced, but people warned that this would result in jealous quarrels (which it did). Young mothers and pregnant women became angry when encouraged by their drinking husbands to dance. The women said it was not right for the unborn or young children. Furthermore, young married women became angry and jealous if their husbands asked others to dance. Some members, who had returned from Tahiti for the festival without their husbands, "lived it up," according to gossip, "while free from their husbands." In general, males tended to dance later in life than women, who were seen as getting over *taure'are'a* thought earlier.



The initiation point for young dancers was unclear, and many young *taure'are'a* boys were very ambivalent about dancing. Some nights they arrived shirtless, in what appeared to be an attempt to mark the fact that they did not wish to dance and were just there to watch. Some boys also took their shirts off in the course of an evening. The nights were chilly, and younger boys, clearly not old enough to dance, all wore shirts to keep warm. In this sense, the absence of a shirt served mainly as a marker. Girls seemed to make the transition into *taure'are'a* couples dancing more easily, and even very young girls dressed carefully and sat on the sidelines waiting for the first dance.

### Contrast between *Taure'are'a* and Adult Themes

In contrast to youthful irresponsibility, sociality, and interpersonal intimacy were adult qualities of responsibility, work, and careful regulation of ties with others. This contrast was most clear in terms of cooperative and competitive economic themes.

As a period of social and economic complexity, the *Rare* intensified everyday patterns of relating. Help and cooperation, for instance, were very useful at this time but occurred only between kin or close neighbors. For example, households within the same neighborhood were much more likely to build their booths together or under the same roof (see Figure 1), and people not building booths helped their relatives weave palm mats for their booths. People cemented in-family ties of cooperation at this time but were economically and socially cautious with others, mirroring everyday tendencies.

One example was the extremely careful establishment of economic guidelines, accomplished in several pre-*Rare* meetings in which licenses were sold for each kind of good to be offered, and prices were set in precise ways for each item (for cookies, pastries, coffee without milk or sugar, coffee with milk, two-finger measures of alcohol, and so forth). Licenses and price lists were posted, and infractions were gossiped about and dealt with by a member of the economics committee. The *Rare* was considered to be a time to make money, and people seemed to feel comfortable only when every competitive aspect of buying and selling was standardized.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the rules and limitations, competition still found its way to the surface.

### Gossip Clarifies Social Expectations

During the *Rare*, social commentary called attention to unacceptable or out of bounds behavior and in this indirect way defined what was acceptable, in bounds behavior. People could infer what others were supposed to be doing

at each life stage by hearing about what they were not supposed to be doing (see Table 3).

Social gossip about young adolescents (stage 4), for example, was primarily about people's appearances and physical skills and about whether they were "ashamed" (*haka'ika*) or not while dancing. *Taure'are'a* were expected to accept their new sexual identities, lose self-consciousness, and perform well.

Gossip about older *taure'are'a* (stages 5 and 6) focused on the acceptable range of youthful beauty through notice of the slightest abnormalities or slippage in individuals' appearances. One girl was seen as too fat, another as "pregnant," a third as having a birth defect, a fourth as not wearing nice enough clothes to dance practice. Adults complained that youth did not adequately represent the ideals of beauty and grace.

Gossip about older *taure'are'a* boys (those living in their own households) stressed the potential wastefulness of *taure'are'a* ways. People gossiped about these young men's drunken binges, broken engagements, and illicit sex.

Talk about newly settled couples focused on marital jealousy and arguments, and the tendency for one partner to wander and dance while the other sat on the sidelines. Couples also fought about money and their in-laws.

Perhaps the most frequent, interesting, and extreme gossip during the *Rare* concerned settled couples whose oldest children were just approaching adolescence. Adults in this state were seen as vulnerable and at risk (similar to Western views of a "mid-life crisis"). Marquesans believed that parents of early adolescent children would try to have one last fling before their children took over the *taure'are'a* ways. People gossiped about men in this stage drinking up the family's profits, leaving all the work to their wives, neglecting their children, beating their wives, being continually drunk, having illicit sex, and depending too long on the in-laws' benevolence.

When a couple's children became *taure'are'a*, people expected the parents' adolescent thinking to go away forever. Gossip about older adults centered on their economic, diplomatic, and leadership roles—about how well or poorly they had regulated economic and social ties, about cheating, selling articles not listed on their license, decreasing prices from the posted list, or letting their food spoil.

## Conclusion

The social messages of the *Rare* highlighted youthful aesthetics and sociality, but presented these in such an overdetermined way that by the end of the festival period adults fell back into relieved acceptance of sedate, mundane, less socially involved everyday life.

TABLE 3. Topics of Social Gossip during the *Rare* Period

Life Stage	Gossip Heard
Transition to adolescence (stage 4)	<p>A is new to <i>taure'are'a</i> dance group; she doesn't know how to dance yet</p> <p>B is new to dance group; she knows how to dance and is not ashamed</p> <p>C is too shy/ashamed (<i>haka'ika</i>); he won't dance the <i>tamure</i> dance</p> <p>D doesn't dance very well, but he is not ashamed/shy</p> <p>E dances and jokes with a boy who is seen by some as too-close kin</p>
Early adolescence (stage 5)	<p>Certain primary school girls will be involved in the dance group when they return to the valley from school—considered old enough</p> <p>Some secondary school girls will not be included in the dance group</p> <p>F replaces G in the front row of the group because G acts too shy</p> <p>H is not included in the group because she is not thin enough</p> <p>I is not included in the group owing to her foot deformity</p> <p>J's father is too overprotective; he won't let her dance in the group; he took her away from dance practice one night</p>
Middle adolescence (stage 6)	<p>The girls in the <i>taure'are'a</i> group should wear nicer clothes to practices</p> <p>K's father is too overprotective; he comes to dance practices to keep an eye on her</p> <p>L should not be in the dance group at all, since she's pregnant and it's beginning to show</p> <p>M used to be in the group, but she married an older man recently; when she made moves toward joining the group, she was called "Madam" by others but insists on joining anyway!</p> <p>The dance group is not very good because the young people are <i>haka'ika</i>!</p>
Late adolescence (stage 7)	<p>N broke up with his fiancée and is now staying with another girl</p> <p>O is very drunk for the whole <i>Rare</i> week; at the end of the week, he sneaks into a girl's house with the intent to sleep with her; he is fined by the family</p> <p>The <i>taure'are'a</i> are not helping their families enough, are lazy</p>
Newly settled couples (stage 9)	<p>P is angry at her husband for dancing during the Western-style dances; she refuses to dance because she has a small child and is pregnant</p> <p>Q is angry at her husband because he won't dance with her during the evening dances; she dances with her three-year-old son in her arms</p>
Somewhat settled couples (stage 10)	<p>R and S have a marital fight over money matters, over tensions living with her (R's) parents, and over the fact that S went off to drink, leaving R to tend the booth; they split up for a while, then both leave the wife's parents' household and establish a new household</p> <p>T spends all the money he and his wife have earned and more on drinking; he leaves his wife to tend the booth; he beats her up when she complains</p>

(continued on next page)

TABLE 3. Continued

Life Stage	Gossip Heard
	U sneaks into a woman's house with sexual intent and is fined; he has an argument with his wife's brother over his infidelity and misconduct
	V and his wife's newborn baby dies shortly after the festival; they fight and V beats her up; people consider them irresponsible for letting the baby die
Settled couples (stage 11)	W serves goods for which he has no license; he lets his meat spoil; a committee member corrects him
	X, Y, and Z want to build their booths outside of the designated area, to avoid complications of being on the school grounds
	AA wanted to buy the pig that BB sold to CC
	DD lowers his liquor prices against the rules
	EE lowers his potato chip prices; booth owners complain to the committee

A range of energetic, desire-laden, and romanticized alternatives to everyday life were explored during the *Rare*. Children searched for continuous sweets and noisy, stimulating play. Teenagers searched for sexual intrigue, romance, and intense social bonding. Adults searched for profits and community respect or had their last flings. Social and physical space was compressed to an untenable extent. Families that usually lived in distant households now lived cheek-by-jowl in a cramped, uncomfortable place. Just as the *taure'are'a* category was seen as liminal (Kirkpatrick 1987), so the *Rare* space and time period presented limited alternatives to the normal lifestyles of households headed by hard-working adults. Normal life was infused with value for Marquesans. Their appreciation for normal life increased dramatically as the *Rare* came to a close.

This account has focused on personal development and local community, not on the larger political and ethnic themes emphasized in Pape'ete or the intervillage themes emphasized in Rapa. At the time of my fieldwork, Marquesans in out-of-the-way valleys understood their social lives, above all, in terms of personal growth and desires, not abstractions of custom and political history.

One prominent Marquesan was not bothered by the fact that the cultural presentations at this Marquesan *fête folklorique* were Tahitian. After all, he commented, the dances and songs are *folk* lore—they're what folks like whether Tahitian, Marquesan, old, or new. Moulin presents a similar view in her discussion of more recent cultural borrowing and political identity:



Some non-Islander visitors to the 1992 Festival of Pacific Arts in Rarotonga were surprised and perhaps even disappointed by an obvious absence of emphasis on strictly traditional music and dance. . . . Several delegations brought both the old and the new with them, and participants obviously enjoyed both. Yet, postfestival discussion in Honolulu indicated real points of disagreement over the original goals of the festival and the new paths being laid. While certain non-Islanders voiced their concerns about tradition, Islanders indicated their irritation over outsider definitions of their arts. (1996: 147–148)

This view of culture as consumption fits Marquesan practices well and could be more widespread than official announcements and anthropological emphases on notions of culture suggest.

### NOTES

1. The fieldwork discussed in this article was conducted in the Marquesas and on Tahiti for a year, from 1976 to 1977. I joined John Kirkpatrick, whose field stay began in 1975. For permission to conduct our research, we thank the Territorial Government and the Commune d'Ua Pou. For support and sponsorship, we thank the Pape'ete Centre of the Office de Recherches Scientifiques et Techniques d'Outre-Mer, then headed by J. Fages. H. Lavondès, the pioneer in recent Marquesan studies, also provided support and counsel. Our fieldwork was supported by the National Institutes of Health (1 F31 MH0 5154–01 CUAN) and the National Science Foundation (SOC 75–13983) and our programs at the University of Chicago. Conversations with Marquesans were conducted in Marquesan and, when necessary, in French. My work focused on social organization, parent-child relations, and family dynamics (reported in Martini 1994, 1996; Martini and Kirkpatrick 1981, 1992). Kirkpatrick attended to Marquesan understandings of social life and psychology, and to social organization (1983, 1985, 1987).
2. See Baré 1992 for a discussion of Tahitian economic categories broadly similar to Marquesan ideas. The attempt to capitalize on the festival as a chance to profit was, like children's attempt to live on candy, a momentary aberration that underlines the importance of everyday modes of life.

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## THE DISTRIBUTION OF SPIRIT POSSESSION AND TRANCE IN MICRONESIA

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This article is a regional descriptive survey, including both the extant literature and contemporary interviews. Analysis of the data is left to a later study. Possession belief combined with trance behavior is the overwhelming pattern from the earliest recordings by the Spanish to contemporary interviews by the authors. The Marianas are the noteworthy exception, with trance and possession frequently occurring separately. The historical and contemporary record of possession-trance is strong for Chuuk, weak for the Marshalls. In most areas, possession-trance changed from the older official, on-demand mediumship to a more spontaneous and individualized response to personal stress, although Palau continues to have both types. Whether official or involuntary, the possession-trance that was once reported of males and females is now virtually monopolized by females, mostly girls and young women. The authors conclude that possession-trance in Micronesia is old, is widespread, is changing with time, and has become an almost exclusively female gender role, but it definitely continues today.

### The Question

THIS ARTICLE ORIGINATED with a more limited study, an examination of possession cases from Chuuk State in the Federated States of Micronesia (Dobbin and Hezel 1995).<sup>1</sup> Even today spirits are a ubiquitous presence in



Chuuk (formerly Truk), and one cannot live there long without hearing reports of persons possessed by them. Here is one sample, altered slightly to protect anonymity, that is typical of the more than fifty case histories we have collected on Chuuk:

The first incident happened when all the family was sitting down to eat. As they sat down, M. rose and ran outside. She returned and said she been visited by two women—her mother's spirit and her aunt's. Just as the family members crossed themselves to begin eating, M. shouted, fell back off her seat and lost consciousness. She awoke and started to scream. An uncle who was knowledgeable in Chuuk medicine was called. When M. saw his arrival, she struggled to escape. She was so strong that her older brothers could barely keep her down. The uncle saw the spirits of the mother and the aunt "on her" and explained that they were angry and wanted to take M. away. He knew why the spirits came: there were bad feelings between the oldest sister and a brother. For his medicine, the uncle chewed certain leaves, perfumed them and washed M.'s body with them. While he was bringing out the medicine, the spirits left and M. calmed down. Since the uncle had already brought the brother with him, he and the oldest sister were reconciled. The bad feelings were caused by a land dispute. M. had another three incidents after this, all within a month. Each time M. would cry and take on the expressions of the dead mother—both in voice and in facial expressions. M. said in her mother's voice, "I want to take her (M.) away because you don't love her." After each incident, M. is so drained that she sleeps for a day and one night. Afterward she doesn't remember anything of what happened. (Hezel and Hung 1989)

In searching the older literature to see if possession-trance was new or continued an older pattern, we found that the literature of a century ago recorded possession-trance (Bollig 1927; Girschner 1912–1913; Kubary 1878), but it was more highly institutionalized in distinct status bearers, male and female, called *wáánaanú*, who were possessed by lineage ancestors and were in the service of the living lineage as mediums.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary possession-trance, in contrast, had become nearly monopolized by females, and, we concluded, although still in the service of family or lineage, it was now stimulated or triggered not by demands from lineage members, but by the personal stress experienced by the possessed individual (Dobbin and Hezel 1995).

The literature search for older references to possession in Chuuk led us into other areas of Micronesia where entranced mediums were also reported, and we began to hear about contemporary cases of possession from other islands in Micronesia. From Yap came reports of women who habitually communicated with the spirits; in one such history, the woman went into a seizure, throwing herself on the ground, shaking all over, displaying unusual strength, and talking gibberish, before relatives and friends would gather to hear the voices of the spirit in her. On Palau, one woman, from a family once well known for its spirit mediums, would shake and tremble, then deliver messages in the voice of the spirits. Without much effort, we found ourselves with possession-trance accounts for almost every region within Micronesia. Such reports led us to broaden the geographical scope of our original study (Dobbin and Hezel 1995).

Our general purpose in this article is to describe spirit possession across Micronesia. More specifically, we ask three questions. First, how widespread is spirit possession across Micronesia? Second, how far back in history can it be traced? Third, what changes in form and function can be traced from earliest records to the present? These are all descriptive goals, although we know that even simple description implicitly involves some analysis and explanation of the occurrence of spirit possession. In sum, we will try to determine the precise geographical distribution and historical time-depth of Micronesian spirit possession so as to obtain an overview of this phenomenon throughout the region.

### **Working Definitions and Assumptions**

Micronesia is a venerable old term that permits us the convenience of lumping together the hundreds of atolls and islands spread over roughly five million square kilometers of the Pacific and located mostly north of the equator and sandwiched between Polynesia and Melanesia. Micronesia today encompasses all of the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands—now politically identified as the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Yap States), the Republic of Palau, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands—in addition to Guam, Kiribati (Gilberts), and Nauru. It includes the two Polynesian outliers of Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro. Micronesia is certainly not a homogenous culture area, although its peoples speak related but often mutually unintelligible languages within the Austronesian language family. Without arguing for or against the validity of the term Micronesia, we assume here the validity of distinguishing Micronesia from Melanesia and Polynesia.

Spirit possession on Chuuk is almost always accompanied by trance or trancelike behavior; we also found this overwhelmingly true for all of Micronesia except the Marianas. Consequently, our descriptions of spirit possession are mostly of possession and trance. Following Bourguignon (1968), we assumed a valid analytic distinction between trance and possession.<sup>3</sup> Trance is the empirically observed behavior, while possession is one of many possible interpretations of that behavior. We stress that the distinction is analytic because the actual observers and participants in possession-trance episodes may not bother to distinguish neatly between behavior and interpretation. We use trance as the popular term for a complex of behaviors called altered states of consciousness (ASC). Many terms are available; we selected trance and ASC only because these terms lack the implicitly negative interpretation of a psychological label such as dissociation. To observers, behaviors such as a changed voice, facial contortions, and bodily convulsions are often indications of a change in the persona of the human host and are frequently associated with crazy, hysterical, and delirious behavior.<sup>4</sup>

What mental health workers have labeled hysteria or dissociation, most local observers would term possession by the spirits or by the devil. Each region, as we will see later in detail, has its own criteria for determining whether an episode is possession. On Chuuk the signs were obvious: voice changes and mannerisms that recall a deceased family member. While most of these particular symptoms appear to be universal in the region, others can vary with the cultural area. Our criteria for possession, therefore, depend entirely on the judgment or interpretation of the culture. By way of summary, possession is defined as the belief that an outside spirit has taken control of at least some of the bodily and/or mental functions of the human host. If the spirits merely influence the thinking and behavior of the host without speaking through the host, this is not usually regarded as possession although it may in fact be an initial step leading to possession.

The original reports in Spanish, German, and English are a hodgepodge of overlapping terms and labels for the practitioners who use possession-trance. Translations into English only compound the problem.<sup>5</sup> We did not try to sort out and delineate the diverse and contradictory uses of terms like diviner, healer, medium, oracle, or priest, but whenever available we used the indigenous term. We kept the labels given in the sources; where an English term was needed, we frequently used "medium" to indicate the official, on-demand type of possession-trance.

### **Sources of Data**

We relied on two data sources. First were the case reports based on our interviews with observers of the possession episodes and, whenever possi-

ble, interviews with the entranced persons themselves. Sometimes the reports were secondhand rather than drawn from actual observations or participation. We stress that these are generally only reports and not observations, although Hezel has had the serendipitous opportunity of observing an episode or two. The negative element in the use of reported sources is, of course, the simple fact that they are not actual observations. The positive element is that the patterns in the reports probably indicate a selective cultural memory that serves to distinguish what are thought to be the essential features of possession from the less consequential.<sup>6</sup>

The second data source was published literature on Micronesia, written accounts that were unevenly spread over the centuries. The rich early description of Micronesian religions by the Jesuit priest Cantova (1722) initially led us to believe that the Spanish interest in missionization and religion would yield extensive materials on the native religions, but Cantova proved an exception and Spanish sources produced but a few scattered references. Mention of possession and trance in the writings of the early explorers is rare. References are more common by the time of the nineteenth-century European naval voyages of d'Urville, Duperry, Kotzebue, Freycinet, and Lütke, but accounts of these voyages still offer little information on religion and on possession. Sea captains, merchants, and even beachcombers fill the gap between the naval voyages of the early nineteenth century and the German period at the end of the last century. The German period (circa 1888–1914), in contrast, produced a rich corpus of reports and studies with extensive references to possession and trance. The missionaries from this period produced in-depth studies of the traditional religions that often became the most complete source on the old religion before intensive missionization. Laurentius Bollig (1927) for Chuuk and August Erdland (1914) for the Marshalls are the best examples. The German South Seas Expedition of 1908–1910, although more concerned with material culture, collated much of this earlier information on religion. The volumes produced by the South Seas Expedition are an invaluable source, even if they are not entirely clear regarding who saw what, owing in part to the posthumous use of original field notes by the final editors.

Data from the Japanese colonial period (1914–1945) are sparse owing to the relative paucity of materials in English. We made use of what we could find but probably missed some evidence from materials that were not translated. The postwar invasion by American anthropologists evinced a burst of ethnographies and information about religion, much like the German period. By the mid-1970s, however, the output of anthropological studies had diminished and little was written about religion, to say nothing of possession and trance, with Lothar Käser's "Der Begriff Seele bei den Insulaner von Truk" (1977) and Catherine Lutz's *Unnatural Emotions* (1988) being



the exceptions. A summary of the data is included in an appendix to this article.

It is true, on the one hand, that many historical references are based on fleeting contact and made by men more interested in flora, fauna, and commercial opportunities than religion. On the other hand, the region produced some early ethnographies with insightful perceptions of human behavior. German scientist Karl Semper was administering a precursor of the Rorschach and the Thematic Apperception Test on Palau in the 1850s, and Polish-born naturalist Jan Kubary wrote lengthy articles on the religions of Micronesia while collecting museum samples for the German trading firm Godeffroy and Son of Hamburg. Even from the standpoint of modern anthropology, there is a fair amount of good ethnographic detail and description of early Micronesian spirit possession. The detail, as might be expected, has its limitations. The descriptions of the trance episodes are all too sketchy, and early sources provide little information on the age and sex of spirit mediums in most places.

### Organization of the Evidence for Possession

In the remainder of this article we will review what is known of spirit possession, island group by island group. In each section, representing a cultural or subcultural area within Micronesia, we will attempt to present a brief overview of possession, as it existed in the past and its present status, compiled from the published evidence and our field interviews.

Using our earlier study of Chuuk possession-trance as a model (Dobbin and Hezel 1995), we expected to find two types of possessed hosts. On Chuuk the possessed trancers called *wáánaanú* served as family and clan links to the ancestors. The alternative was possession or trance by a person who falls into the episode involuntarily and is not understood to be a special status holder. Recent Chuukese cases and the post-World War II ethnographies, however, indicate that the social position of the *wáánaanú* has disappeared although the behavior survives. The recent cases showed the same body of spirit beliefs, possession interpretation, and trance behavior, but possession was more spontaneous and uncontrolled, responding to personal stress. In our earlier study, we noted that recently females almost monopolize the possession-trance, which a century ago had been open to males and females (Dobbin and Hezel 1995). Today possession-trance works as a way of airing and resolving family disputes and other sources of personal, individual tension. In this study, using the Chuuk study as a model, we explore whether similar phenomena, beliefs, and changes are taking place elsewhere in Micronesia. Hence, on the basis of the Chuuk material, we typed the older form as the "on-demand" or "official" type and called the recent type

“involuntary.” It should be noted, first of all, that these types are institutionalized to the extent that they are culturally sanctioned behavior and, secondly, that the types are often at the opposite end of a range of possession types.

### Southwest Islands of Palau

Extending some 375 miles southwest of Palau are four atolls of Carolinian-speaking peoples that are sometimes known as the Southwest Islands of Palau. A part of the Republic of Palau today, these islands are either uninhabited or sparsely populated, since most of their inhabitants have migrated to Palau. During the German period, both Kubary and members of the German South Seas Expedition observed and recorded possession-trance ceremonies. These ceremonies were performed by specialists, that is, distinct status holders, and were of the type we have called official or on-demand. Kubary visited Sonsorol in 1885 and was invited to observe a ceremony performed by a local “priest” named Taur. With his hands prayerfully folded and his eyes closed, Taur’s upper body shook and he let out a soft whistle; then, drenched in sweat and in a rather excited state, he told Kubary that “two men got in him and said: ‘Everything goes well. The white man belongs to him and is his friend’ ” (Kubary 1889:85). Kubary, however, was quite skeptical about the performance and doubted whether he had seen a genuinely native version of the ceremony. Later writers merely quote Kubary and add nothing new about Sonsorol (e.g., Eilers 1935:72–73).

On Tobi, members of the German South Seas Expedition also observed possession-trance ceremonies by the local “priests.”

The chieftain raised his hand to the heavens, the priest let himself down on the altar on a large bowl turned upside down. They began a type of litany or trading-off song in a wailing voice, amid loud rattling in the throat, sniffing, and hissing. The only intelligible word was tobacco. When it was over, the other priest, almost blind, was led in and the hissing began anew. Gliding on his knees and loudly squabbling, a third priest moved toward the white men and the accompanying Palau man. The chieftain made it known to them that [the spirit] Rugeiren was now in the body of the priests. Meanwhile the cry swelled louder in intensity and shortly reached a peak of about three minutes, during constant muscle spasms and sniffing, while all were deathly still. (Eilers 1936:109, our translation)

German colonial administrator Georg Fritz had observed a similar episode shortly after the turn of the century, describing the “priests” as clearly in a

trance or ecstatic state (1907). The shipwrecked American sailor Horace Holden may have seen a similar performance back in the 1830s, but his description is vague (Holden [1836] 1975:86–87). In any case, the entranced “priests” on Tobi, like those on Sonsorol, functioned as something of a court oracle for chiefs and were persons of significant power and influence (Eilers 1936:106).

On Pulo Ana and Merir, in contrast, German expedition members heard that healers rather than diviners subjected themselves to possession-trance. Eilers relates that there were once men on Pulo Ana to whom the ancestor spirit Maretaisai appeared and, upon payment of a gift, healed the sick (1935:246). The possessed healer shook violently as he spoke. Sarfert described a similar possession-trance healing ritual on nearby Merir (*ibid.*: 356). People who believed their illness to be caused by other persons prayed to a spirit by the name of Masaa and offered a gift to the spirit’s medium. When Masaa appeared, the medium shook violently, shouted and sang, and seemed to contend with the spirit that had brought on the illness.

On Tobi spirit boats were found hanging from the rafters in the spirit houses (Eilers 1936:106–108). The German expedition meticulously described the layout of the two spirit houses, one of which had been seen almost a century earlier by Holden and measured thirty by fifty feet. Augustin Krämer stayed in one of the houses and describes it as having three parts, a spare room (where he lived) and two other parts, one of which contained the spirit boat and was off-limits to all people (*ibid.*:106–107).<sup>7</sup> An altar stood in the spare room; here the priests became entranced as the god Rugeiren took possession of them. Rugeiren was believed to descend by means of the spirit boat and to speak to the “priest.” Curiously, one spirit boat was double-hulled; the other was a simple outrigger hung with plants, flasks, and necklaces, as well as bowls of turmeric and oil—gifts to the god Rugeiren. The spirit boats were repainted in an annual ritual that was conducted by the chief and followed by a feast.

We have no evidence of any form of possession-trance in the southwest islands today, although one informant claimed that the Tobians living on Palau “know about possession.” From contemporary Tobi itself there is only one case—and that an analogous one. Anthropologist Peter Black has described the case history of one man who was believed to have become a ghost; Black thought the case to be a “functional equivalent” of possession (1985:288).

### Palau

Very early reports about Palau attest to mediums in the service of the local chiefs, but association with possession-trance is documented only later. Cap-



tain Edward Barnard, an American shipwrecked on Palau in 1832, wrote of being taken to the residence of the "chief priestess" who was consulted by the chiefs about important decisions (Martin 1980:20). Seated behind a curtain of mats, she was asked questions and after five minutes responded with a favorable answer: the chiefs were permitted to help the stranded sailors. For her services she received payment in glass beads (*ibid.*). Barnard relates that she was also sought out for healing (*ibid.*:29). In the 1870s German scientist Karl Semper witnessed a similar divination ritual, likewise performed for the benefit of the chiefs and conducted behind a curtain of mats, but Semper added that the "priestess" spoke in a falsetto voice ([1873] 1982: 216). On a second occasion and before a different "priestess," he again heard the priestess speaking in a changed voice—in a "loud high voice like a ventriloquist"—and putting forth a "deluge of words." She was one "in whom the gods were accustomed to enter," commented Semper (*ibid.*:254).

The possession rituals of the spirit medium, stimulated by the rapid chewing and spitting of betelnut, were responses to petitions from the chiefs or from community individuals, accompanied by offerings of money or betelnut. The spirit medium responded, with legs and arms trembling and face distorted, speaking in the voice of a spirit (*chelid*), often for hours at a time. Sometimes the mediums spoke from behind a curtain "so that one can only hear the disguised voice"; at other times they performed directly in front of those who asked for their help (Kubary [1888] 1967:22). Ceremonies usually took place at the residence of the spirit medium, which was considered the *chelid's* temple. Sometimes a small shrine to the *chelid* was built near the community house, or *bai*. Hanging from the rafters of one such community house Kubary found a large wooden box, which he compared to the spirit boat associated with possession in the southwest islands and in Chuuk.

Spirit mediums, known as *kerong*, were an important institution in early Palauan society. The status of spirit medium was open to both male and female, regardless of the gender of the spirit served. If, however, a young man was chosen as the medium for a female spirit, the man was treated like a woman in nearly all respects, that is, he dressed as a woman, performed women's work in the taro patch, and may have adopted the sexual behavior of a female, as Kubary alludes ([1888] 1967:21). In a brief but detailed picture of the call to become one of these spirit mediums, Kubary wrote that a candidate tries to "appear as unnatural as possible, yawns while running around and performing nonsensical actions" (*ibid.*:19). Success in doing this signified that a spirit, or *chelid*, has selected the individual as its instrument and was taking up residence in him or her. As this was happening, the spirit medium began to adopt gestures that were identified with the specific spirit. Each subsequent possession frenzy was seen as a confirmation of the special status of the medium, until eventually the lineage heads in the community



formally recognized the candidate as a *kerong* by presenting to the medium an offering of betelnut for the possessing spirit.

If the earlier accounts from Wilson, Barnard, and Semper about “priests,” “priestesses,” and “prophetesses” can be identified with the *kerong* of Kubary’s description, then the dominant function of the medium was as an oracle, especially in connection with the political decision making of the chiefs. *Kerong* were also consulted about sickness and healing, in order to “calm down the spirit of the sick person” (Kubary 1873:224) or to ask the *chelid* why the sick person was afflicted (Kubary [1888] 1967:203). Later reports during the German occupation confirmed the political role of the *kerong* (Born 1907). Indeed, the political power of the *kerong* had become so formidable that early in this century the chiefs aligned themselves with the German colonial administration in an attempt to suppress the *kerong* (Vidich 1952:27; Shuster 1982:62–65; Hezel 1995:117–120).

Most of the post–World War II ethnographies describe *kerong* (e.g., Barnett 1949; Force 1958; Vidich 1949, 1952), but it is often difficult to determine if the authors were merely repackaging Kubary, drawing on the memory culture of their informants, or giving an account of contemporary practice. Palauan Felix Yaoch’s paper on Modekngei, the nativist religious movement, is the only postwar writing to describe an actual observation of a seance (1966). Yaoch thinks there has been a recent revival of possession-trance, especially among families with a long association with Modekngei (pers. com., November 1993). In recent years a few individuals, most of them women, are known to have practiced spirit possession to assist those seeking their help. Although much rarer now than formerly, *kerong* possession appears to be having a resurgence in one or two parts of Babeldaob even as this is written.

A few cases of involuntary possession have also been recorded in recent years. Hezel’s field notes mention two young girls who rather suddenly and involuntarily burst into a violent trancelike state; they spoke in changed voices and were considered by onlookers to be possessed (Hezel 1993–1994). These two cases, in which possession was triggered by family tensions, are probably of the involuntary type found so commonly in Chuuk.

In short, the record for Palau documents a long history for the official type of possession-trance in the person of the *kerong*. Remnants of this type of possession continue today. The evidence from early sources is very weak for the existence of a spontaneous, involuntary type existing before the present. Yet, such cases are to be found today and suggest the possibility of an evolution of possession from voluntary to involuntary, as in Chuuk.

### Yap Proper

In the nineteenth-century sources on Yap there is only one brief mention of spirit possession. An article compiled from reports by Alfred Tetens and Jan Kubary stated that the islanders "had inspired priests whom they question as an oracle for advice and they place offerings before them during the questioning" (Tetens and Kubary 1873:96).<sup>8</sup> Later, in the early twentieth century, Wilhelm Müller of the German South Seas Expedition and Capuchin missionary Sixtus Walleser supplied some of the missing detail.

Müller and Walleser agree that Yap belief encompassed a variety of spirits as well as a variety of specialists serving those spirits. Sorcerers and magicians of various kinds were called *tameron*, one of which was thought to be able to exorcise those possessed by the *kan* (glossed by Müller as "demons" [1917:366]). The "spirit callers" of the departed ancestors, as this type of *tameron* is termed, are referred to by Yapese as *pong-zagiz* (Walleser 1913:1057). These spirit callers were clearly official status holders and the position could be hereditary. Müller found one family where both father and son were possessed by the spirit Lug, although the son also served other spirits as well. At least some spirit callers were channels of healing. One of them, in return for gifts bestowed on him by a client, called upon the spirit Lug, who reportedly spoke through his mouth and revealed the nature of the client's illness and the kind of medicine that could cure it (Müller 1917:377).

Associated with the *kan* and the *pong-zagiz* were spirit houses and bowls carved in the shape of a miniature boat in which petitioners left their offerings. Müller examined the contents of one of these bowls and, to his disappointment, found nothing more exotic than a few stingray spines, shards of glass, and two small modern Japanese plates (1917:377).

According to Walleser, there were many *pong-zagiz* on Yap, in addition to others who seemed to be practicing possession-trance with an eye to becoming known as spirit callers. "Even women, who otherwise have no importance, understand zagiz-calling well and practice it diligently," Walleser wrote (1913:1057). In the eyes of Müller these "others" were not diviners or prophets. "Persons who are possessed without having the gift of prophecy are extraordinarily numerous," he wrote. "There are several in every district. Most of them are probably epileptics" (Müller 1917:377). Elsewhere Müller describes one of these marginal possession cases: that of a song composer, Dogiem, who may not be a *pong-zagiz* but is cryptically called a "medium." The spirit first came upon Dogiem when he was a young man. "When the *kan* came to him . . . he was alone in the clubhouse and was practicing an obscene . . . dance, and he became like a madman. This condition lasted for

a month and then he knew the song. Even now an inner impulse sometimes drives him to wander through the village on moonlit nights and to shriek loudly" (ibid.). Apparently Dogiem functioned like a *pong-zagiz*, for some Yapese setting out on a long fishing trip came to him and offered a young coconut for the *kan* (ibid.:378).

Between the first decade of the twentieth century and the present, we found nothing in the literature beyond a cursory note from memory culture. The five cases within recent memory, however, do hint at continuity with the past, although possibly only as a survival. In 1993 Hezel recorded four cases of a medium or spirit caller similar to the pattern depicted by Walleser and Müller. In one case the possessed woman was "regarded by people as a medium who had facility in conversing with spirits"; in another the possessed woman was believed to be able to foretell the future, to be "psychic" (Hezel 1993–1994). In yet another, the woman would go through a "seizure" before the spirit communicated: "She would throw herself on the ground, shaking all over, and her family would attempt to restrain her. . . . When the communication with the spirit began, she would speak what sounded like gibberish but was thought to be a special spirit language. . . . It appears she did not choose the time, but was attendant on the movements of the spirit to determine time and place. . . . Her reputation was widespread in Yap. Everyone knew that she was obtaining powerful information from the spirit" (ibid.). The fourth woman experienced a change in voice when going into a seizure, and she "was said to be able to converse with the spirits" (ibid.). It is not coincidental that the date of birth for all four is before World War II, between 1900 and 1930. Although it is not always clear from the brief case histories whether the host spoke in the voice of the spirit or the spirit simply spoke to her, there are strong similarities with the old spirit callers. The last surviving spirit caller is a woman from Fanif, now in her seventies, who practiced in her spirit shrine up until the 1950s, when she was converted to Catholicism (Apollo Thall, pers. com., November 1993).

Instances of involuntary possession in modern times seem to be rare. A twenty-six-year-old female from a family with no reputation for producing mediums or for honoring the old spirits was possessed in 1992 (Hezel 1993–1994).

In Yap, then, the evidence from the turn of the century is strong for the official possession-trance medium, the spirit callers or *pong-zagiz*. Besides the spirit callers, who engaged in classic possession, there was at that time another marginal category: "those who had *kan* in the head" (Müller 1917: 378); this may or may not have entailed full trance-possession. These included amateur or aspiring *pong-zagiz*, inspired musicians, and perhaps

even the mentally ill. Later cases of older women show similarity and continuity with the spirit mediums of old, with just a single case of involuntary possession.

### The Central Carolines

The Central Carolines are a string of low-lying coral atolls that stretch almost eight hundred miles from Ngulu, southeast of Yap, to the westernmost outliers of Chuuk. The inhabitants of the dozen and a half inhabited islands all speak mutually intelligible dialects of a closely related language chain and share a basic culture. There was and still is considerable interchange between the islands.

The oldest record of possession-trance in the Central Carolines comes from Ulithi, the dominant atoll in the chain. Sometime in the 1860s, German trading captain Alfred Tetens recorded an episode in which "a high priest appeared who, in the belief of the islanders, was possessed by some spirit, and in his ravings he answered the questions of the king" ([1889] 1958:92).

The Russian naval explorer Frédéric Lütke, who visited some of these islands in 1827, described a type of possession and exorcism on Woleai that differs from what is reported of other parts of Micronesia. A few individuals, wrote Lütke, enjoyed the prerogative of seeing and hearing "Hannoulape" (i.e., Anulap, the main spirit) and making known his commands; but "apart from that, they enjoy no particular consideration or privilege" (1836:187–188). These individuals, Lütke reported, were often subject to attack by the evil spirit who lives in the coral. When this spirit establishes itself in the body of the chosen one, the person lets out a horrid howling and goes through all kinds of contortions as he rolls on the ground. At this point the exorcist<sup>9</sup> arrives and declares that the evil spirit has taken over the man and that he, the exorcist, is prepared to fight this enemy. With a pair of lances in hand, he immediately attacks the possessed person and pursues a ritual battle with the hostile possessing spirit. The sick man arises and begins fighting with the exorcist; they do battle for a time, throw their lances, and then pick up their dance sticks and start dancing and throwing coconut milk here and there until they are completely exhausted. Lütke reported that this sham combat could be repeated, sometimes continuing for weeks, until the exorcist announced victory. In times of calamity, added Lütke, the possessed also sought to divine the intentions of Anulap through the agency of any of their children who died at an early age. It appears that individuals with a propensity for mediumship emerged from the general population and, once recognized, were sought out by others for divining Anulap's will.



Lütke, however, makes a point of mentioning that these mediums had no special privileges (*ibid.*).

Anthropologist William Lessa's historical detective work, building on the German ethnographical studies, may take the record further back in history. Even though possession-trance mediums had all but disappeared after World War II when he did his fieldwork in Ulithi, Lessa was able to find the remnants of a cult to an infant named Marespa, born about 1839:

The child [Marespa] was born in Mogemog, and died after a week. His soul remained there and from then on spoke through the mouth of his father, who sat and walked as if in a sleep. It could be clearly distinguished when Ramal [the father] and when Merasepa spoke. If the latter was speaking, Ramal spoke in a falsetto voice like a baby, but always in distinct words. . . . Ramal had to drink coconut oil and eat mint leaves in order to fall into a trance. In this condition he was an oracle to be questioned in matters of disease, approaching typhoons, and so on. (Müller 1917, as quoted in Lessa 1976:68)

The possessed father was also the first missionary for the cult of Marespa, taking it to Ngulu and Palau. The German South Seas Expedition in 1910 found the cult still extant on Ulithi, Ngulu, Palau, and even in the southwest outliers of Palau, some seven hundred miles southwest of Ulithi. The chief of Ngulu told a German ethnographer in 1910 that years before, when Marespa's father came to that island, the people asked him "to leave Marespa there with them," which he did for a payment of turmeric, turtle shell, and belts. Then a man named Uaethog ate oil and mint leaves, just as Marespa's father did to induce trance, and Marespa "went to him" (Müller 1917:375–376). Krämer found Marespa still honored on Elato and Lamotrek in 1909 (1937:139), but by the time William Alkire did his original fieldwork there in the early 1960s, Marespa and his medium were only a memory (1965:114). In fact, Alkire had to reconstruct laboriously from his informants' recollections the role of the Lamotrek mediums. Of the three mediums specifically remembered, all were examples of a specific type of medium (*waliyalus*)—that kind of mediumship in which the spirits enter into a marriage relationship with an unmarried woman (*ibid.*:117–118).

Lessa found that on Ulithi until recent times many people were selected by Marespa to be his *wasoma*, or mediums (1950:20). Those who were habitually possessed could lay claim to the title of *wasoma*; those possessed only once or twice could not make that claim. The *wasoma*, therefore, are possession-trance mediums of the official or status type. By the time he

wrote, Lessa had to rely on his informants' recollection in order to reconstruct a picture of possession-trance, spirit mediums, and the Marespa cult on Ulithi: "Today there is no one living who has been possessed by Marespa, yet in the recent past there were many such persons" (ibid.:120).

Spirit possession in the Central Carolines had clearly waned by the early twentieth century, when the area was visited by the German anthropologists of the South Seas Expedition. When Hambruch arrived on Faraulep and Sarfert visited Sorol in 1909, all that remained was the memory of possessions—in contrast to earlier times when "the spirit often went into ordinary people who then practiced a kind of prophecy" (Damm 1938:199). It is noteworthy in Hambruch's brief comment that possession occurred in ordinary people ("*gewöhnlichen Menschen*"), whom Hambruch and his editors do not identify as mediums.

On Puluwat, one of the easternmost atolls of the area, however, the German ethnologist Sarfert found evidence for the survival of possession-trance, of both the on-demand and involuntary types. One boy on Puluwat, who was said frequently to be possessed by a spirit of the dead, "prophesied" the arrival of the South Seas Expedition's steamer (Damm and Sarfert 1935:200). There were two variations on possession-trance, according to Sarfert. In some cases, like that of the boy, the human host trembled, talked rapidly, but spoke comprehensibly; in other cases the host spoke unintelligibly in epilepticlike fits. Those who spoke in comprehensible language could predict future events such as the arrival of ships, the outbreak of epidemics, and the disappearance of people; they also were a source of new medicines and remedies (ibid.:200–201).

The Central Carolines had a long tradition of spirit callers and mediums, the historical record shows. Informants from Woleai recently testified that, up until the end of World War II and even after, there were individuals known as *walalus* ("canoes of the spirit") who summoned the spirits. One informant spoke of a female *walalus* on Eauripik of whom, when she was in a trance state, people would ask which spirit was upon her; speaking for the spirit and in its voice, she would answer their questions. When asked about the whereabouts of some people taken to Yap during the war, she correctly described their exact hiding place under an orange tree. Chants based on her responses to these questions are still sung and danced on Woleai today, although this type of mediumship is no longer practiced (Dobbin 1993–1994). On Lamotrek and Ifalik (and we assume on other islands) the spirit callers were usually possessed by deceased kin. An important exception is the possession cult that grew up around the apotheosized infant Marespa and spread to nearly every part of the Central Carolines.

Anthropologists working in the region shortly after the war continued to

record possessions. Burrows and Spiro witnessed possession-trance episodes on Ifalik during the 1940s, and they agree on the main ethnographic detail. Spirits did not possess at random, according to Burrows and Spiro, but sought out someone in their own matrilineage. There might be several possessed persons of either sex in a single matrilineage, but a person who was repeatedly selected as a host for the spirit soon became recognized as a *walalus*. A special person was the *tamon alusuia*, which Burrows and Spiro translate as "leader for (matters concerning) the *alus*," whom they describe as a hereditary religious-medical specialist (1953:242). Unlike other possessed Ifalik people, the *tamon alusuia* was possessed by only one spirit, who used him as his unique mouthpiece. The *tamon alusuia* inherited the office patrilineally and passed on the office to a trainee designated by the possessing spirit.

The behavior, as recorded by Burrows, was similar to spirit possession in other places. One youth described how the spirit once descended on him and he began shaking from head to foot, singing in a high pitch (Burrows 1949:193). Elsewhere Burrows and Spiro write that possession was marked by "a kind of convulsive seizure . . . in which there seems to be a high degree of dissociation, which may last for quite a long time" (1953:239). One possessed man, "unquestionably in an altered state" in Burrows's view, afterwards claimed amnesia (1949:193). The authors thought fermented coconut toddy played some role in stimulating the possession-trance. They likewise noted how infectious the episodes might be, with onlookers also becoming possessed.

Later anthropologists like Lutz and Rubinstein, working in the area during the late 1970s and 1980s, apparently found a radical decline in possession practiced by the spirit callers or official mediums, and they did not record any activity on the part of the *tamon alusuia*. All of the possession cases Lutz described on Ifalik in the early 1980s were involuntary and haphazard, much like the postwar cases documented in Chuuk. Rubinstein reports that on Fais the official spirit callers were still rather common in 1975, but the younger generation, under the influence of Christianity, was discrediting this institution. He witnessed at least one episode of involuntary possession during his stay on Fais: a middle-aged woman, known to be having family problems, who began shaking violently and claimed that she was possessed by her dead husband (Rubinstein, pers. com., October 1993).

If we look at the Central Carolines as a whole, the evidence is strong for possession-trance of both the on-demand and the involuntary types continuing from at least the late nineteenth century to well after World War II. The possessing spirits were generally the spirits of deceased kin and less frequently divinized personages brought from other islands (as in the case of

Marespa). The work of the on-demand mediums was in diagnosing sickness, in healing and revealing new remedies, and even in creative inspiration. In the involuntary cases of possession-trance, possession was often considered the cause of a sickness or an affliction. Compared with the on-demand mediums, the behavior appears more clearly to be a genuine altered state of consciousness and not a simple change of voice. There is some indication that possession-trance was on the wane by the time of the South Seas Expedition in 1908–1910.

### The Mariana Islands

The picture of possession-trance in the Marianas is much murkier than in other places. The Marianas were the first island group in Micronesia to be intensely missionized and colonized, and hence the indigenous culture is heavily overlaid with Philippine, Spanish, and even Mexican beliefs. Moreover, the early Spanish records about possession and trance are exceptionally skimpy; we have only two brief and highly ambiguous sources. Because the beliefs and practices of seagoing Carolinian migrants, who settled in Saipan as early as 1815, have been commingled with those of indigenous Chamorros, interpretations of the little evidence we possess are liable to be mistaken. In general, we can say that Chamorro traditions, whether early in the Spanish period (1521–1898) or in recent years, do not present a strong and unequivocal record of indigenous possession-trance. There is, however, a long-standing record of spirit-caused trance without possession.

The early Spanish record for possession and trance comes almost entirely from either the Franciscan priest Juan Pobre de Zamora's account of a seven-month stay in 1601 (Driver [1602] 1989) or from Francisco Garcia's biography of the early Jesuit missionary Diego Luis de Sanvitores ([1683] 1985).

Juan Pobre, a Franciscan friar who lived in the Marianas for several months after his shipwreck in 1601, described the workings of the Chamorro religious leaders, the *macanas*, who he reported could heal, bring rain, and foretell the future:

He [the devil] appears to some indios, especially to these *macanas* who are most intimate with him, in the guise of one of their ancestors whose skull the *macana* has in his house and, because he has not performed well the ceremonies the devil has required of him, the devil abuses them, often leaving them weak and exhausted. At times he threatens them by saying: "Because you do not see to it that I am respected, and because you do not respect the skull and



because you permit people to go up into your house, I will make sure that you drown. Do not go out to fish today or tomorrow because your boat will capsize. You will not be lucky fishing, nor in your plantings, because you have not done what I have commanded you to do." Then, between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, they will usually go about the village raving and shouting. The indios who have been awakened then recognize the illness that has struck the ill-fated one. (Driver [1602] 1989:22–23)

The passage is difficult to interpret. On the one hand, the *macanas* described by Brother Juan seem to have had only experiences, perhaps apparitions, of the skull's spirit—something short of possession. The displeased spirit then beat the poor *macana* and turned him stark raving mad, in what might be called trance or a form of hysteria.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, what Juan Pobre described may have been possession after all, for Garcia quotes Sanvitores regarding "Anites or evil spirits who try even against their will, to possess the poor Christian natives with their own fears and mistreatment" (Garcia [1683] 1985:75).

Garcia, our second early Spanish source, also wrote about the *macanas*, whom he described as prophets and impostors who invoke the dead; the devil, he reported, appeared to them in the forms of their parents and ancestors (ibid.:50–51). Elsewhere he described a "demonic" boy who was brought to the padres and was successfully exorcised by them after a year and a half of being "the devil's habitation" (ibid.:57). Sanvitores found a woman on Saipan he described as possessed of a devil; indeed, it seemed to Sanvitores that the whole village was possessed (ibid.:87–88). There is a distinct possibility that the Christian missionary Sanvitores read possession into the happening. That is all the evidence from early Spanish sources; later reports about the *macanas* merely paraphrase Garcia (e.g., Le Gobien 1700).

The next independent record, written more than two hundred years later, consists of a short observation by Saipan District Officer Georg Fritz in the first decade of the twentieth century. Fritz seems to describe something short of possession: "In Garapan lives a woman who communicates with the *anite* [spirits]. Her father is also acquainted with one. The woman's husband has observed how she walked into the forest at night and talked with ghosts" ([1904] 1986:90). Garapan was the residence of many Carolinians, so the woman could have been Chamorro or Carolinian. Thus Fritz's note brings us to the post-World War II period with only three certain facts: some possessions were recorded, a wild and berserk behavior was observed in the *macanas*, and people communicated with the spirits. From what we

know of the outer islands from whence the Carolinian population migrated, these details for the Saipan-based Carolinian population would be expected.

Accounts for the Chamorro populations after the war continue the themes of spirit communication and some trancelike behavior not associated with possession. On Saipan in the 1940s, Alexander Spoehr found what he termed a well-defined cultural pattern of “hysterias” that were believed to be spirit-caused (1954:203–205). Spoehr wrote that Chamorros, when afflicted by spirits, sought out their own medicine people, the *suruhanu*, to apply their pharmacopoeia of herbs, plants, and various medicines, but they also sought treatment from Carolinian healers, who were regarded as even more effective (ibid.:206). Dobbin’s interviews in 1993 confirmed Spoehr’s description of the Carolinian healers but added that the healers were possessed, often moving into a frenzied trance state during the healing session itself (Dobbin 1993–1994).

In summarizing the evidence from the Marianas, we find in the very early Spanish records some indication of the involuntary type of possession. Trance behavior, although not explicitly described, can be assumed to have accompanied the possession (as in the case of Garcia’s description of the boy possessed for a year and a half), since the Christian Spaniards would have looked for the distinctive signs of European demonic possession. The only on-demand type of possession-trance came from the contemporary Carolinian community on Saipan; the details match a pattern found throughout the Carolines. Thus we have two traditions among the Chamorros: one is of involuntary possession-trance and the other is of trance without possession. Trance behavior without accompanying possession belief is not found elsewhere in Micronesia.

## Chuuk

The evidence for possession-trance in Chuuk is extensive and spans a time-depth of at least a century. Kubary, the Polish-born naturalist who visited Chuuk in 1877, was the first of several early authors testifying to institutionalized spirit possession involving a recognized medium: “The chief is the middleman between the call and the spirit of his ancestor. But to contact the spirit an incantor ‘au-ua-ro-ar’ [*awarawar*] is necessary. He squats and rubs the inside of his thigh and howls and wails ecstatically. The chief then asks his questions and interprets from the stammer of the magician the answer” (Kubary 1878:258).

Later, during German rule in the Carolines, the colonial physician Girschner and two missionaries verified Kubary’s description of possession

occurring to a recognized status holder, the *wáátawa* or *wáánaanú*, who is regarded as the vehicle of an ancestral spirit during a trance state.

If one wishes to get advice from the spirits, one goes to a Waitaua, tells him what is desired, and gives him some gifts for his services. The sorcerer sits on the ground and calls the spirits. They come and set themselves down on him (*moatu*); he is possessed by them, and becomes an *auwarawar*, a possessed one. This is manifested in his quivering, cramped hand motions, nodding head and such. He enters a state called *merik*; the spirits open his mouth (*sanau*) and speak through him. First one, then another spirit speaks, for anyone can, if he wants to, receive and answer through the seer, but in a special language, different from the ordinary, the spirit language. The *merik* state does not last long, about 15 minutes, and after awakening the Waitaua tells the others what he has heard. (Girschner 1912–1913:191–192)

From the German period we also have Father Laurentius Bollig's description of a Micronesian possession-trance medium, probably the most extensive in the literature (1927:60–64). He described the *wáánaanú* role as grounded in Chuukese beliefs about spirits, the soul after death, and medicine; the *wáánaanú* were often the channels through which spirits bestowed new medicines (*safei*) and the chants that accompanied them. Bollig also observed the relationship between the medium and the social unit, probably the lineage, which he called the "tribe" (*ibid.*:31). In the lineage meeting houses of that time hung the *far* or *náán*, a double-hulled miniature canoe that was considered the dwelling place of the spirit who would, in turn, descend on the *wáánaanú* in order to give the family group answers to their questions. When someone in the lineage died, according to Bollig, the group would gather and hope that the deceased spirit would settle in the *far* and choose one of its living members as *wáánaanú*. The *wáánaanú* were, therefore, something like lineage mediums, maintaining contact with the deceased of the lineage in order to guide the living through the future. Bollig counted over ninety spirit mediums on the tiny island of Fefan with a total population of less than two thousand.

Hambruch, who visited the outer island of Nama with the South Seas Expedition, observed the same linkage with the lineage. On Nama, the spirit of the dead, empowered by Anulap (Great Spirit), often enters into a living person amid groaning and convulsions and speaks about matters of importance to the chief and his family (Krämer 1935:154). It was the chief who called upon the spirit, although the latter usually spoke through someone

else in the chief's family. In one such dialogue between chief and spirit, the spirit voice berated the lineage for not following his wishes and threatened to kill one of its members. The chief handed the entranced man a gift and coconut water and pleaded with the spirit: "We will fulfill all your wishes. But kill none of us. Because, look, we must die once, and we will see you then. Spare us thence this time" (ibid.:155–156). The medium here was more than a court oracle and, as Bollig noted, served the whole family group. On nearby Losap, Sarfert found a hanging miniature double canoe similar to that described by Bollig; it was called the "spirit seat" (ibid.:144).

These mediums, theoretically at least, could be either male or female. Bollig wrote that any man, woman, girl, or boy could be called by the spirits (1927:60), while another missionary claimed that the mediums "are usually males, but there are also some isolated females" (Anonymous 1915:8). Much later, Frank Mahony, who appears to have been recording recollections of things past, wrote that each lineage ideally wanted to have a male and a female medium (1970:137).

After World War II, however, the long and rich descriptions of the *wáánaanú* disappear. By that time mediums were "being neglected and forgotten" (Mahony 1970:139). Gladwin and Sarason described possession as rare (1953:166), and Mitchell's informants told him the institution of the spirit medium was on the decline and a medium was not always necessary for communication with deceased kin (1975:89–90). Other literature from the period (e.g., Caughey 1977) seems to be based largely on memory culture—that is, recollections of the way *wáánaanú* once functioned. But the phenomenon of spirit possession, which was described in the literature from the 1950s to the 1970s as rare, moribund, or in decline, underwent a resurgence from the 1970s on and is still widely discussed and witnessed today.

As we have described in detail elsewhere (Dobbin and Hezel 1995), the status-person formerly known as the *wáánaanú* has disappeared, but the behavior and the interpretation of possession and trance continue, albeit with a somewhat changed function. The contemporary cases of possession-trance involve almost exclusively women, especially young women, seeking an outlet for personal problems that are usually related to their families. The description at the beginning of this article is one such case. In these recent cases of spirit possession, which we described as "involuntary," the person is not given the recognized status of *wáánaanú* and does not move into trance "on demand," so to speak. Yet we found that, like the *wáánaanú* of old, many of these cases are in service of the family or the lineage; they frequently lead to family meetings to discuss the problem that a spirit ancestor has revealed through a living descendant.<sup>11</sup>

Of the fifty cases originally collected by Hezel and Hung in 1989, only



three older women, whose possession-trance episodes predate World War II, seem to have once been recognized as *wáánaanú*. Clearly, then, the *wáánaanú* has disappeared but the trance behavior and the possession interpretation continue. Many of the recent possession-trance cases were treated with Chuukese medicine as well as with Christian rituals such as aspersions with holy water. In some cases a specialist in medicine (*sousafei*) was sought out. Part of the function of the medicine is diagnostic, that is, to determine what spirit is present and whether it is good or bad. In short, the work of the *wáánaanú* continues, but in a complex that includes the entranced person, the possessing spirit, Chuukese medicine, and often the Chuukese healer.

Nowhere in Micronesia have we found the contemporary evidence for involuntary possession-trance as strong as in Chuuk.<sup>12</sup> Without a doubt, Chuuk offers the best record in Micronesia for early and contemporary possession-trance and the strongest clues regarding the continuity between old and new functions of spirit possession.

### Pohnpei

Possession-trance has deep roots in Pohnpeian history and legend. Cultic priests of an earlier age were said to have put themselves into a hypnotic trance and, as *wer en ani* ("vehicles of the spirit"), answered questions in the mode of a public oracle, but these priests had died out by the time of Paul Hambruch's fieldwork for the German expedition (Hambruch and Eilers 1936:130–131). Mediums (*soun-katiani*) who habitually succumbed to possession-trance states were also reported in the last century but died out sometime after World War II. The involuntary and spontaneous type of possession-trance also has its roots in the past, but it continues to the present. The term *katiani*, which Pohnpeians usually equate with spirit possession, seems to be an umbrella term for possession-trance, whether by priests, mediums, or ordinary people.

The general picture for Pohnpei, then, is the standard one for Micronesia: official and on-demand possession-trance has disappeared, but the involuntary type continues. What is distinctive on Pohnpei are the oral histories and legends that may trace possession-trance back centuries earlier, even to the 1600s.

The first European record of Pohnpei possession-trance comes from James O'Connell, an Irish seaman who was stranded there sometime about 1830 and found his way into a titled family. O'Connell witnessed at least two possession-trance episodes, which he passed off as so much "mummery" ([1836] 1972:144–145, 154–156). Later observers were able to place O'Connell's descriptions in a more scientific light. Paul Hambruch thought that

O'Connell saw a curing ceremony (*winani*) in which the priest attempted to find out what ancestor spirit was causing the suffering (1932:38). The other instance was, according to Hambruch's reading, a medium caught up in a possession episode (ibid.:33), although Riesenbergh thought the second episode was an example of "feigned madness" (O'Connell [1836] 1972:156). Missionary Luther Gulick, in an 1853 letter, described the curing ceremony in greater detail: "When a priest has taken *ava*, or *joko* [*kava*] . . . the particular spirit active in causing the sickness, is supposed to enter him, and from the spirit proceeds the sickness and all the unusual contortions of countenance etc, and all the priest says are utterances of the spirit" (quoted in O'Brien 1979:46). This is an interesting twist on the relationship of possession-trance to sickness, if we read Gulick correctly. Generally in Micronesia possession can be either a manifestation of illness or a method of divining the cause of an illness in someone else; here the priest submits to possession by the same spirit believed to be causing the illness in another in order to effect the remedy in the victim.

Evidently, *kava* and ritual possession by the priests were employed by Pohnpeian priests for a variety of divining needs.

Whenever it is supposed necessary to have communication from the spirit, [*k*]*ava* is given to a priest; and sometimes he is during the process hidden from view by a mat set up around him. Immediately on swallowing the *ava*, he commences rubbing his legs & body with many long drawn sighs, & curious contortions of the muscles of the face. Soon he sputters, & begins to utter words which are supposed to come from the spirit desired. Questions are often asked for the spirit to answer, & these queries are generally so framed as only to require monosyllabic responses. (Gulick 1854)

Fellow missionaries Doane and Sturges also witnessed a possession seance, this time by the "ancient god . . . *Isiopau* [*Isopahu*]," who was announced as having arrived from *Pasit*, the land under the sea. The medium's performance failed to impress the invited missionaries:

[The medium's] talk was all in loud whispers. We at once saw it was a woman dressed in a man's clothes, but as we wished to lead her out we asked many questions about the land of her residence, etc., and she did the same to us. . . . We continued our interview for some half hour or more . . . then threw the mats aside that screened her from the crowd, hoping they would see for themselves, but they closed their eyes and scampered out of the house! During the

evening we came again to the house and found a large crowd there, some of whom were possessed by the spirit, and were crying, singing, praying and throwing themselves into all sorts of contortions and shapes most frightful. (Sturges 1856)

This description represents one of the few examples from Micronesia of what might be called possession-contagion and is surely a case of the involuntary type, although the onlookers were probably delighted that the spirit had also struck them.

The possessed priests who are so prominent in the nineteenth-century accounts all but disappear in the twentieth century. The oral histories by Bernart (1977) and Silten (1951) provide two testimonies to this change. Although Luelen Bernart put on paper between 1934 and 1946 the oral histories preserved by his family, he was born in 1886 and thus would have known the German period as a boy. The generalities in which he wrote of spirit possession suggest that his descriptions were drawn from a time long past. He wrote: "When the spirits would possess them the bodies of the mediums would change greatly. He no longer had the appearance of people nor the voice of people. His eyeballs would be like the eyes of a wild beast and his voice would be different" (Bernart 1977:93). The Silten typescript has but a fleeting reference to the spirit mediums taking part in revolt against the Saudeleurs, who were toppled sometime in the 1600s (1951:20).

The priests had disappeared by 1910, according to Hambruch, and little is heard about the spirit mediums after 1945. In 1947, anthropologist Saul Riesenberg found only a single man on Pohnpei who knew how to divine with a kava cup while possessed (1968:109). Although Riesenberg recorded various other cases of mediums undergoing trance-possession, some involved in curing rituals, these were but distant memories of past personages and rituals (1949:409; 1968:58, 106, 159). By the time anthropologist Roger Ward entered the field in the mid-1970s, spirit possession had become a relatively common occurrence once again, but the possessions were mostly found in adolescents, women, and low-status adults (Ward 1977:19, 229). The transition to involuntary possession on Pohnpei, mirroring what was happening in Chuuk and other islands, was taking place.

We have case histories of seven recent involuntary type possessions on Pohnpei; one comes from an émigré Mortlockese family and the rest are Pohnpeians (Hezel 1993–1994; Dobbin 1993–1994). All six Pohnpeian cases are women, most in their teens or early twenties; in five of these cases family problems were associated with the onset of the episodes. Behavioral manifestations included changed facial and eye expression, voice changes (recognized as deceased relatives), physical collapse, bodily contortions, babbling,

and thrashing movements. All of this left us with a pronounced sense of the general history of possession-trance on Pohnpei: the official mediums who belonged to one of the priestly lines and served as oracles have vanished along with other “professional” spirit mediums, but they have been replaced in our own day by chance victims of low status.

Nothing that the German ethnographer Anneliese Eilers wrote about possession on nearby Ngatik, Mokil, or Pingelap differs from Pohnpei, except that she found far less detail in the outer islands. On Mokil she found that people still remembered a spirit house (*um eni*) where the priest, *ne nau*, was asked questions regarding the future, but she made no mention of possession or trance with respect to this house (Eilers 1934:380).

Jane Hurd, who collected oral histories from Pingelap, traced the history of possession of one legendary spirit, Isoahpahu, who was believed to have been the fourth paramount chief of Pingelap (1977:41–42). According to Hurd’s account, this spirit had a long history of possessing prominent Pingelap leaders, including the highest island chiefs (*ibid.*:43, 98). Hurd recorded the stories of Isoahpahu seeking out new mediums, but included nothing on the mediums themselves, their ritual, or their behavior.

### Kosrae

Not surprisingly, documentation from Kosrae is skimpy. It is remarkable that any record exists after a half century of depopulation through disease accompanied by intense missionization and conversion. There is but one relevant report from Russian explorer Lütke’s 1827 visit to Kosrae and some memory culture accounts of possession-trance from the German South Seas Expedition. What Lütke saw was the ritual use of *seka* (kava), described in this account of a ritual in honor of the Kosrae demigod Sitel-Nazuenziap:

The man who played the principal role was seated, his legs folded underneath him, on the back of the tub in which they carry the water when they drink seka. He had a necklace of young coconut branches around his neck and held in his hands the wand representing Sitel-Nazuenziap, which he continually pressed against his knees. His eyes were troubled, he kept turning his head, sometimes hissing in a strange manner, sometimes hiccuping and sometimes rattling and spitting, as they ordinarily do when they drink seka. He pronounced broken and inarticulate words, among which one could sometimes hear “uosse Litske” (that is what they generally called me). The whole thing seemed to be an imitation of the state of a man drunk with seka, and I thought for a long time that he really



was. . . . He ran in the street moving the wand in all directions, and all those who found themselves in his way dispersed in a hurry. At the end of a half an hour or so, he came back carrying the wand like a gun posed for a bayonette charge, entered the house by the side door, lowering his body as if in secret and, after having replaced the wand, came to sit with us as if nothing had happened. (Ritter and Ritter 1982:130–131)

What seems totally out of place to anyone who has seen people drinking kava is the wild and frenzied behavior of the man in Lütke's description; kava is soporific. Lütke himself was not certain what the ceremony meant, but Ernst Sarfert with the German South Seas Expedition used the recollections of his informants in 1910 to interpret the passage.

Sarfert took the ritual to be a description of the Kosraean *tol* at work. The *tol*, according to Sarfert, was a professional medium, who summoned the spirits of the dead for information, but he was not one of the *tomon anut*, or official priests. "During the dealing with the spirits, the *tol* found themselves possessed: in this situation, the spirit of the deceased entered into them and produced a type of ecstasy, along with convulsive trembling of the entire body and utterance of inarticulate sounds. The *tol* could induce this state at will. Afterwards they reported to the questioner the spirit's statement, its wishes, and its prophecies" (Sarfert 1919:413–414). Sarfert's informants told him of another human-become-god, Silkiak, who also possessed his chosen medium, but not with the ecstasy and convulsions that the *tol* ordinarily underwent; Silkiak made his presence known by a loud whistling and the *tol* "conducted himself quite calmly" (ibid.:414). Sarfert admits that he never personally witnessed the *tol* ritual, and we are left to wonder when these ceremonies were last performed on Kosrae.

The little we have from Lütke coupled with detail from Sarfert's informants tells of two sets of religious specialists on nineteenth-century Kosrae: priests and mediums (although Sarfert tells of one medium who was accorded the status of priest). The mediums observed by Lütke went into an ecstatic trance associated with the drinking of *seka*, but there were others who received the possessing spirit in relative calm and apparently without *seka*. This variation is not surprising considering the cross-cultural evidence of trance states produced by the opposite extremes of hyperactivity and profound inactivity (Ludwig 1968; Henney 1968, 1974).

There is no clear indigenous evidence, old or recent, for the spontaneous type of involuntary possession-trance except for the case of one female Kosraean teenager attending school on Palau. During an episode that lasted twenty minutes, the girl's voice changed to that of a male, she babbled and

dribbled saliva, and she moved and groaned as though having intercourse. She was abnormally powerful and threw a strong male bystander against the window. After a Chuukese student administered local medicine, she quieted down. This sole instance of possession could possibly be attributed to non-Kosraean influences, however, since she was attending school abroad and her healers used Chuukese "medicine" (Hezel 1993–1994).

### Polynesian Settlements

Not far from Pohnpei are two islands inhabited by Polynesian-speaking peoples: Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro. On Nukuoro in the nineteenth century, Kubary found neither the possession nor the trance he had earlier described for the Mortlocks or Palau. On Kapingamarangi in 1947, Kenneth Emory found possession-trance of both the on-demand and the involuntary types, but the situation is problematic because of the influence of mediums who were descendants of castaways from Woleai (Emory 1965:200). Those possessed by the Woleaian gods were not dignified with the name for local priest, *ariki*, but were simply called "those concerned with medicine." Possession by a spirit (*aitu*) is called *hotupe* and happened to men and women. The practice of voluntarily inducing possession was said to be of Woleaian origin (ibid.:312–313). Emory, who witnessed and filmed several episodes of involuntary possession on Kapingamarangi, described the behavior as epilepticlike and hysterical. A psychologist on Emory's team interpreted one of the possession cases, that of a young woman suffering from her husband's neglect, as an attempt to attract sympathetic attention for her plight (ibid.:317).

In the late 1940s Emory found possession by evil spirits "a fairly common phenomenon" (ibid.:316); two decades later Michael Lieber would say the same about Kapingamarangi migrants living on Pohnpei (1968:126). Lieber's comments on the origin of involuntary possession in Porakiet are congruent with the judgments made by others elsewhere in Micronesia: "The incidence of *hotupe*, possession, has corresponded in all cases with previous anxiety of the victim stemming from familial or marital problems, and seems to be one of the institutionalized means of coping with them or resolving them" (1968:129).

### Marshall Islands

The record of possession-trance for the Marshalls is an anomaly for Micronesia, for there is no unequivocal evidence of possession-trance, past or present, in this area. None of the early writers of the German period mention it: neither August Erdland's ethnography (1914) nor Krämer and

Nevermann's volume for the German South Seas Expedition (1938). None of the anthropologists in the field shortly after World War II mention it—not Jack Tobin (1954), Alexander Spoehr (1949), Robert Kiste (1974), or Leonard Mason (1954). Erdland found the traditional religion already in decay by 1914, but still recorded many examples of interaction and communication with spirits. He recorded that some spirits steal human souls and other spirits are seen sailing by canoe into their victim and must be exorcised by a magician (Erdland 1914:312, 314). Although this account might seem to suggest possession, it could refer to mere "spirit encounter" since there is no mention of trance. There are a few contemporary hints of possession, perhaps even possession-trance, in the Marshalls, but these too are dubious. Marshall Islanders do know stories and legends about possession that sound remarkably similar to those from nearby Chuuk. For example, female spirits or demons like to possess pregnant women and even cause their death. The *Marshallese-English Dictionary* lists terms for possession by demons and by good and bad spirits (Abo et al. 1976), but how the vocabulary and stories relate to past and present real occurrences is uncertain.

Some 1993 interviewees on Majuro felt that spirit possession did occur in the past and offered as evidence the existence of a Marshallese term for a possessed person, *mijin kwar*. They maintained that possession might still be found on the distant atolls away from the population centers of Majuro and Ebeye, and some vaguely recalled hearing of possession occurring to women, especially those who were pregnant or who had recently lost a child. These women showed extraordinary strength and were prescient. There was an unconfirmed report of one female teenager who was repeatedly possessed during her years at high school and who would get a glassy look in her eyes and start yelling things like "He's coming, he's coming" (Hezel 1993–1994). Nevertheless, the existence of spirit possession in the Marshalls remains disputed.

### Kiribati

Arthur Grimble, a British colonial administrator in the 1920s and 1930s, wrote much about the Kiribati spirit world and human communication with it but never seems to have reported any possession or trance. A longtime missionary from the same period, Ernest Sabatier, however, clearly documented possession-trance, both official and involuntary. The official variety, according to Sabatier, appeared in the figure of the *ibonga*, whom Father Sabatier variously described as soothsayer, magician, divine, doctor, prophet, miracle-worker, and charlatan (Sabatier [1939] 1977:59). The *ibonga*

formed a close relationship with the *anti*, the gods and spirits of the deceased; they alternately acted as a translator of the spirit's wishes and as one possessed by the spirit: "Sometimes he [the *anti*] moves into the *ibonga*'s body and then the witch doctor will go into a trance. His muscles stiffen, his stomach swells and his eyes become as large as coconuts. People have seen this, so who can deny it?" (ibid.:60). Sabatier gave several detailed descriptions of the showmanship of the *ibonga*, including fire-eating. His one description of an involuntary case of possession takes on the appearance of a struggle between the possessing *anti* within the hard, swollen belly of a thirteen-year-old girl and the missionary attempting to exorcise the spirit (ibid.:78).

Sabatier's involuntary case from the 1930s compares well with records of two contemporary cases, a female and a male. The female, in her early twenties when the episode occurred, stared at the informant with strange and sparkling eyes (Hezel 1993–1994). She had not eaten for two weeks because every time she tried, she was racked with convulsions. She then began thrashing around and rolling on the ground. At one point she threw a male to the ground with one arm and showed prodigious strength all the while she remained in this state. She would scream, "They are here." Finally, villagers surrounded her and beat her with palm fronds dipped in holy water, after which she quieted down, although people reported that a clearly visible red streak ran up her arm.

The male, about fifty, had gone through a bad time with his village about land rights. He became sick and was taken to the hospital, where he began going into fits. A woman massaged him in hopes of curing him, and she noticed a strange mark on his back, indicating that he was possessed. When the mark was detected, he shouted, "The army is coming." This was interpreted as a reference to the host of spirits that were coming to take possession of him. People gathered to pray over him and he screamed, fell to the ground, and thrashed with his arms extended like a turtle, before he suddenly quieted down.

Our informant said that there are common features of involuntary spirit possession in Kiribati: the possessing spirits are thought to be plural;<sup>13</sup> they are seen as descending on the victim; the spirit will leave some physical mark on the body, like the red streak on the woman's arm; and expulsion is accomplished by holy water or local magic (Hezel 1993–1994).

### Nauru

Paul Hambruch of the German South Seas Expedition spent six weeks on Nauru in 1910 and recorded both involuntary and on-demand possession-



trance. Almost all Hambruch's information about religion came from a single informant, Auuiyeda, who was apparently recalling at least some customs that had already disappeared.<sup>14</sup> Hambruch claimed the islanders had no gods, only the spirits of their ancestors, on whom they relied for a wide variety of help. Islanders, according to Auuiyeda, would "call" to their ancestors for help in sickness, pregnancy, or even a fight. When men and women saw the spirits who had been called, they acted like wizards or sorcerers, shouting and yelling "Ai! Ai! Ai!" Those hearing the shouting would come and ask the ancestors for information about, for instance, fishing prospects for the next day (Hambruch 1914:274–276). If the information was correct, the sorcerer or the "truthsayer" was later given gifts. Hambruch claimed that in addition to the men and women who were professional mediums (*Zauberer[innen]* in German), there were others who worked with the secrets of black and white magic and still others with "extraordinary qualities" who were possessed by the ancestors. The mediums, added Hambruch, used formulas known only to themselves, manipulated certain relics, and "achieved the desired results through some sort of hypnosis and suggestion" (1915:263–264, our translation).

The ancestral spirits were customarily honored in the houses as the patrons of the living and were given food and drink at the center pole of the house; by the time of Hambruch's visit, however, Catholic families had put up holy pictures or a holy water font on this sacred spot. The description is probably the clearest statement in Micronesia of a household cult, complete with household spirits, shrine, and ritual: "The souls of the dead members of a house are the guardian and house spirits of the family; now and then they may enter into family members, who then are the vehicle of the spirit and the agent of his will; offerings will be made to that spirit at the center pole of the house; every clan [*Sippe* in German] has its own guardian spirit" (Hambruch 1915:262, our translation).

Certainly Nauru once had professional, on-demand mediums who used possession, although the case for trance is less clear. If we read Hambruch correctly, there were also spontaneous outbursts of possession-trance. It is less clear just where the family members who became vehicles of their ancestors fitted into the schema of possession. They seemed to represent a halfway point between the professional mediums and the spontaneous outbursts, but their possession episodes were within the bounds of cultural expectations.

The Nauru story, then, is somewhat unique in Micronesia because of the focus on the household cult.<sup>15</sup> Also interesting is the place of the frigate bird, which, as elsewhere in the Pacific, was thought to be a spirit bird—the incarnation of the dead (Hambruch 1914:281; 1915:263).

### Conclusions

Although our main purpose in this article was merely to describe the geographic distribution and historical depth of spirit possession in Micronesia, a number of conclusions emerge from the data we have gathered.

1. Spirit possession seems to have been found in every island group in Micronesia. Even for the Marianas and the Marshalls, where documentation is weakest, fragmentary evidence suggests, though it does not prove, the practice of spirit possession. Possession is a deep-rooted feature of precontact cultures in the area, one recorded from the early nineteenth century on by successive waves of European visitors and verified, for the most part, by German anthropologists in the early part of this century.

2. Spirit possession in traditional times was performed by recognized mediums who voluntarily underwent a trance state. In some places, such as Palau, Pohnpei, and Yap, this trance state was induced with the aid of locally available pharmacological agents like betelnut, kava, and coconut toddy. The mediums were generally adults of either sex who were publicly acknowledged spirit callers. The status of the mediums varied from island to island. In Pohnpei and Kosrae, some of the spirit mediums were cult priests in the local religions; in other places like Palau and Yap, the mediums constituted an independent high-status class with a strong following in the local community and sometimes even from beyond. In Chuuk and Nauru, in contrast, mediums were chosen from within the lineage to serve its own needs and seldom functioned outside this small circle.

3. Spirit possession was practiced as a means of obtaining important information from spirits, usually ancestral spirits but sometimes local deities. Often the purpose was to effect healing in an individual by learning what spirit-borne afflictions the sick person was suffering from so that appropriate cures could be sought. Possession was, therefore, treated as a powerful diagnostic instrument in healing. It was also commonly employed as a method of divining all things unknown, including what would happen in the future, and in this respect sometimes functioned as an official oracle that assisted chiefs and title holders in their decision making. The information sought was of various types and might include such things as good fishing sites, techniques related to special skills such as crafting a canoe, and themes for creative activities such as dance and song composition.

4. Throughout Micronesia the medium was referred to as the "vehicle of the spirit." In many places this concept of traffic between the two worlds, that of the living and that of spirits, was expressed in the imagery of a model canoe that was kept in the meeting house, spirit house, or place where the possession occurred.

5. Spirit possession ideation and beliefs traveled extensively over the vast expanse of Micronesia. The people of Pulusuk knew about spirit beliefs in Saipan; Kapingamarangi was heavily influenced by Woleaian practices and belief regarding trance-possession. The Marespa cult that had its beginnings in Ulithi ranged throughout much of Micronesia during the last century.

6. Traditional spirit possession seems to have been on the decline by the beginning of the century, as German ethnographers of the early 1900s showed. It had already disappeared on many islands and would gradually fade away on others up to and after World War II. Today voluntary spirit possession performed by spirit callers is virtually extinct, although there are hints of a resurgence in Palau, one of the strongholds of official possession.

7. A new and less institutionalized form of spirit possession has begun to appear in many parts of Micronesia, even as the older forms fall into disuse. This new type of trance-possession is sporadic, unintentional, and befalls the uninitiated and those who have no standing as mediums. This new form of possession occurs most commonly to younger women, often in response to personal or family tension. The pattern described by the authors for modern-day possession in Chuuk seems to fit most of the other island groups just as well, although possession may not be as common there.

We can conclude, then, that possession-trance in Micronesia: (1) is widespread, (2) is old, (3) changes with time, (4) is now a largely female gender role, but (5) definitely continues today. Hence, spirit possession is yet another instance of "continuity and change" in the island societies of Micronesia.

## APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE

This graphical summary is fraught with difficulties, the most serious being the lack of clarity and definition in the original sources. It should not be used independently of the narrative in this article. Each category (time period, reference to possession and trance, type of possessed person) pigeonholes the data with a precision and clarity often lacking in the sources.

*Time Period* is split into the earliest sources (often published years or even decades after the accounts they record) and those after World War II only for convenience, although the split reflects the scarcity of Japanese sources and the intensification of anthropological research. Unfortunately, many of the postwar sources rely on memory culture, that is, informants' recollections of things past and no longer part of the living culture. Sometimes it was difficult to sort out "memory culture" references (see narrative for source documentation). Perhaps the time dimension should have been split into three periods to include the florescence of ethnography during the German period, but here again the German data (especially those of the South Seas Expedition of 1908–1910) often only synthesized evidence found in earlier works.

*Reference to Possession and Trance* uses the schema adopted by Bourguignon (1968), which sees the phenomenon of trance as occurring with or without possession belief, and possession belief as occurring sometimes without accompanying trance.

The categories for *Type of Possessed Person* are likewise problematic. "Official," as pointed out in the narrative, summarizes a societal recognition of possession-trance as a distinct status or position in the social structure. "Involuntary" indicates a situation where the possession-trance is culturally understood but is not accorded that distinct status. Sometimes, as in the case of Palau, candidates first experience the "involuntary" trance, which is perhaps later recognized by the community as a distinct status. Thus "involuntary" and "official" often form more a continuum of societal recognition than two discrete types.

Island/Atoll Group	Time Period	Reference to Possession (P) and Trance (T)	Type of Possessed Person
South of Palau	Holden [1836] 1975? or Kubary 1889 post-WWII	PT  NA	official
Palau	Keate 1788	perhaps medium without P or T	official
	Semper [1873] 1982 post-WWII	PT PT	official official & involuntary

(continued)



Island/Atoll Group	Time Period	Reference to Possession (P) and Trance (T)	Type of Possessed Person
Yap proper	Tetens & Kubary 1873?	PT	official
	post-WWII	PT	official & involuntary
Yap State, Carolinian speaking	Freycinet 1829	PT	official?
	post-WWII	PT	official & involuntary
Marianas	Pobre de Zamora (Driver [1602] 1989, 1983)	T only?	involuntary
	Le Gobien 1700	PT, but with Filipinos	involuntary
	post-WWII: among Carolinians	PT	official & involuntary
	doubtful among Chamorros	T only? P only?	involuntary
Chuuk State	Kubary 1878	PT	official
	Bollig 1927	PT	official; perhaps involuntary
	post-WWII	PT	official? involuntary
Pohnpei	O'Connell [1836] 1972	PT	official
	Sturges 1856	PT	official & involuntary
	post-WWII	PT	official & involuntary
Kosrae	Lütke 1836; Ritter & Ritter 1982	T only	official?
	Sarfert 1919	PT	official; involuntary?
	post-WWII	PT	involuntary
Polynesian settlements	earliest	NA	
	post-WWII	PT	official & involuntary
Marshall Islands	Erdland 1914	P only or mere encounter	involuntary
	post-WWII	PT?	involuntary
Kiribati	Sabatier [1939] 1977	PT	official & involuntary
	post-WWII	PT	involuntary
Nauru	Hambruch 1914, 1915	PT	official & involuntary
	post-WWII	NA	

## NOTES

1. The bibliographic search for the Chuuk study and this expanded one was assisted by Rose Hanson and Jeffery Murray of the University of Maryland on Guam.

2. Terminological purists might prefer to distinguish between mediumship and possession. Thus when spirits *speak to* a human and that person conveys the message to others, it is mediumship. Possession is the belief that an outside spirit has taken control of at least some of the bodily and/or mental functions of the human host. In this strict sense of the word, if the host simply receives information from a spirit, even one located within the human body, it is not possession. We prefer a broader use of possession and mediumship, because we think it reflects the wide variety of spirit communication beliefs in Micronesia, beliefs that the Micronesians themselves do not distinguish as possession or mediumship, whatever the indigenous terms. In many possession-trance episodes, the same individual during the same episode may act as a spokesperson for the spirits (medium) and later have the spirit itself speak through his or her mouth (possession). In Micronesia, a radical behavioral change, such as a voice change and display of unusual physical strength, indicates to believers that the persona is now that of the spirit, that the person is possessed. When possessed persons occupy a distinct status within the social structure, we call them mediums. In Chuuk the *wáánaanú* was a medium; contemporary possesseees, however, are not given distinct status and are thus not mediums. Occasionally the word *wáánaanú* is used to describe the contemporary possessee, but it is used more like a verb to describe what is happening.

3. As Bourguignon also noted in her world survey (1968), possession can occur without trance and trance can occur without possession. Where we found only trance or only possession, we thought these to be isolated cases of incomplete description, with the notable exception of the Northern Marianas and Guam.

4. We used Arnold Ludwig's schedule of behavioral symptoms for ASC to indicate presence or absence of trance (1968:77-83); we list here only the main headings: (1) alterations in thinking, (2) disturbed time sense, (3) loss of control, (4) change in emotional expression, (5) body-image change, (6) perceptual distortions, (7) change in meaning or significance, (8) sense of the ineffable, (9) feelings of rejuvenation, and (10) hypersuggestability.

5. We tried to use original sources, although sometimes only an English translation was still extant (e.g., apparently the case with Anonymous 1915). When quoting more than a phrase written in German or French, we used existing translations and have noted this in the bibliography. Where no accurate translation existed, we included our own, as in the case of Eilers 1936 and Hambruch 1914, 1915. Frequently, the translations were distributed through the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) at Yale but were translated in the 1940s under the auspices of the U.S. Navy.

6. Of course, we see possession-trance reports through the cultural and time-period lens of the observers, be they Protestant or Catholic missionaries, naval captains, merchants, or professional American anthropologists. The historical quality of the older sources is admirably reviewed by Lessa (1962). For the later sources, especially those from the German period, we think writers must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and that task is a volume in itself. Only with *The Book of Luellen* and the Silten Manuscript from Pohnpei do we have the local "lens," prior to filtering by Western and Japanese sources.

7. A watercolor by Elizabeth Krämer of a spirit boat from Fais is found in Krämer 1937.
8. The adjective “inspired” is frequently used by German writers to described possessed individuals. Sometimes they compare the “inspired priest(ess)” with the Greek oracles. It seems reasonable to assume that the adjective references possession or trance or both; they were writing at a time when classical Latin and Greek training would have easily suggested the similarities.
9. The French is *conjurateur*, which could be translated as conjurer, incantor, or exorcist.
10. Cunningham interprets this same passage to mean that the devil possessed those who did not obey the *macana* (1992:101). We cannot find possession so clearly indicated here; moreover, Brother Juan seems to say that it is the *macanas* themselves who go berserk. Nor can we agree with Laura Thompson, who, using this same passage, concludes that the *macana* treated or exorcised other people who were possessed (1945:25).
11. In our earlier publication on possession-trance in Chuuk (Dobbin and Hezel 1995), we address the differences in psychocultural dynamics between the older and the contemporary possession-trance.
12. We can certainly say that we have more contemporary records of possession-trance from Chuuk than from any other Micronesian area. Apart from the Marianas, however, Chuuk State (lagoon and outer islands) is the largest population in Micronesia, so the disproportionately large number of recorded cases may be a function of the large population. But even in reports from before the First World War, islanders from the Central Carolines said possession was not as common there as in Chuuk. We cautiously conclude that possession-trance, at least in recent years, is more common in Chuuk than elsewhere in Micronesia.
13. In his prepublication review of this article, Bernd Lambert wrote: “Contrary to what the authors were told, mediums are normally possessed by single spirits, not by groups. The most powerful and feared spirits nowadays have at best a vague relationship to the old pagan deities. Perhaps the best known is George, who is said to have been introduced from Fiji by way of Tuvalu. Mediumship can supposedly be taught, like many other kinds of esoteric knowledge and skills. The man who cried out that an army was entering his body was probably influenced by Mark 5:9, although the Kiribati Bible uses *Rekeon*, ‘legion,’ in this verse rather than the usual word for ‘army,’ *te taanga*.”
14. Hambruch also used a work produced by a physician, Kretschmar, who had spent a year on the island in 1912–1913. We did not have access to Kretschmar’s work, but, as quoted by Hambruch, he agrees with Hambruch that there was on-demand, professional possession-trance.
15. Aloys Kayser, then a missionary on Nauru, did a scathing review of Hambruch’s work and understanding of the language (Kayser 1917–1918). About the subtleties of the language, wrote Kayser, Hambruch knew “almost nothing,” especially about the more difficult questions concerning the mediums (ibid.:315). Kayser objected to Hambruch’s failure to distinguish between the soul as medium and a spirit as medium, but did not challenge the existence of possession-trance (ibid.:331).

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## REVIEWS

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Michael French Smith, *Hard Times on Kairiru Island: Poverty, Development, and Morality in a Papua New Guinea Village*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994. Pp. 278, map, illus., glossary, bibliography, index. US\$39 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

*Reviewed by David Lipset, University of Minnesota*

THIS BOOK ANALYZES ideological ruptures that are forborne by the people of Kragur village, who live on an island located just offshore of Wewak, the provincial capital of the East Sepik Province. With eloquence and an austere simplicity that belies the complexity of the context he successfully describes, Smith examines the contrapuntal cultural environment in which Kragur men and women think through and construct notions of community, work, and exchange. His accomplishment, in my view, is the most telling account of local-level change that has yet been written about any society in the Sepik region. And not since Ian Hogbin's classic 1930s ethnography of neighboring Wogeo has a Schouten Island culture benefited from such a deft hand.

One could say, summarizing Smith's argument, that the Kragur are Durkheimians: they believe that collective order—in which they invest magico-religious agency—must constrain profane individualism. Success in work depends on the inhibition of conflict and the comprehensive participation of the community together with its attendant congeries of ghosts and spirits. Grievances, illness, sorcery, and the like are understood to interfere with or reduce material prosperity. The Kragur view themselves as upholding "the Good Way"; they are generous and hospitable people who seek to help one another, work hard for each other, and are devoted Catholics. The contra-



diction between "the Good Way" and the demands of petty capitalism, with its emphasis on accumulation of resources, could hardly be more stark; and villagers continually engage in an ambivalent debate about it.

Politically isolated and economically marginalized, the Kragur see themselves as living in poverty. They long for progress and play an active role in creating change. But progress, as they construe it, casts doubt upon "the Good Way." They garden taro, process sago, hunt a little, and fish on a seasonal basis. The productivity or success of these enterprises is facilitated by hereditary magicians of each patriclan in the village and by petitions to the ghosts of kin. Crop failure, they believe, is the result of antisocial behavior, for example, infighting among their leaders.

Catholicism, which the Kragur adopted seventy-five years ago, is a strong and visible force in the community. But its doctrines and cosmogony have been given a local flavor appropriated to accord with indigenous notions of magical agency and mythic spirits. The Virgin's celibacy, for example, fits with the sex tabus to which magicians should adhere to preserve the efficacy of their spells. Her gender accords with indigenous associations of fertility and material prosperity to the feminine. If anything, Smith concludes, the adoption of Catholicism has increased the presumed connection between moral relations and prosperity in the thinking of the Kragur.

In a superbly realized extended case study, Kragur men are shown responding to and constructing a syncretic series of conflicts to explain the nonappearance of an annual run of fish offshore of their village. But after months of debate in which all of the purported grievances so nominated are resolved through various remedies still fail to produce the fish, Kragur women, skeptical and irritated, begin to complain. The men ought to return to work and resign themselves to the possibility that they may not discover the specific cause of the disastrous fishing season, accept that it must have arisen from a secret, unresolved conflict of one sort or another.

Given their piety and ethic of hospitality, Kragur people view themselves as possessing a special virtue. Surrounded by and embedded in white, Western values to which moral standard they compare themselves, they also see themselves as failures: whites, after all, don't practice sorcery, whites don't favor kin, whites don't fight over women. Smith's arrival presented the Kragur with another opportunity to argue about the moral value of "the Good Way." How should Smith be treated? How should his house be built? Should foodstuffs be given freely to him or sold? Their dialogue is rendered vivid and poignant. According to "the Good Way" and the Catholic model of exchange, both of which stress generalized reciprocity and devalue the material world, services and food should be given freely. But the values of individualism and the world of commodities in town are overwhelming and

propose that money be charged. The Kragur puzzle over the claims of these contradictory logics and contrasting moral standards without resolution. Other examples of changing notions of work, time, and prestige burn through this monograph giving voice to and elucidating the perplexities in terms of which the people live the prosaic drama that they create and that is created for them on the periphery of capitalism.

This book could be profitably included with Taussig's *Devil and Commodity Fetishism* and Ong's *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline* in middle-level undergraduate courses on change. It could be included in regional courses on Pacific peoples and cultures. Such is Smith's singular achievement, it could also be used in graduate seminars on culture, history and agency, economic development, and the like.

Frederick K. Errington and Deborah B. Gewertz, *Articulating Change in the "Last Unknown."* Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995. Pp. xvii, 196, maps, photographs, bibliography, index. US\$59.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

*Reviewed by Alexander H. Bolyanatz, Wheaton College*

Errington and Gewertz address the phenomenon of the negotiation of personal value on the part of Duke of York Islanders in Papua New Guinea. Using penetrating analyses of both everyday and out-of-the-ordinary events, the authors show that an important component of life on Karavar Island and elsewhere in the Duke of Yorks in the 1990s is a struggle to define a sense of identity and worth in the context of a social environment replete with "isms," including (or having included) colonialism, postcolonialism, capitalism, nationalism (in the form of parliamentary democracy), revivalism, and individualism.

In such a milieu, the question of identity is not only not easily answered, but the answer can change. Is one, for example, a Karavaran Islander or a citizen of the independent nation-state of Papua New Guinea? Yes, both; but who determines the salience and concomitants of each status? This leads to the issue of worth. Many Karavarans and others find that this question leads to contradictions. Is a sense of worth to be found, for example, in self-interested capitalistic prosperity or in pursuing more "traditional" routes to success?

My use of quotation marks in the previous sentence is intended to echo Errington and Gewertz's caution to be careful when thinking about terms like "tradition." Indeed, the authors begin this book by arguing against the

fallacy of essentialist thinking that so often underlies terms such as “traditional” and “modern.” More specifically, Errington and Gewertz point out that, before the arrival of European influence, Duke of York Islanders never lived in a “fragile Eden,” nor have they ever been trapped in a system of “inflexible tradition” (pp. 1–18). The rest of the book is an elaboration of this argument against essentialism: in the same way that it is an error to imagine an undifferentiated precontact setting, so also is it a mistake to imagine an undifferentiated postcontact setting. Instead, Duke of York inhabitants, like people most everywhere, are shown to engage in efforts to find satisfactory answers to identity and worth questions. In so showing, Errington and Gewertz provide an extremely compelling assortment of evidence against that most profound of essentialisms, that between “them” and “us.”

Errington and Gewertz have assembled a series of anecdotes, incidents, and episodes—all nicely bundled in half a dozen chapters—that serve to illustrate the struggle for a sense of identity and worth in the (formerly colonial and now postcolonial) context of power and wealth disparities in one corner of twenty-year-old Papua New Guinea. After the introductory essay addressing tradition, the authors introduce us, in chapter 1, to reports penned by Australian patrol officers in the 1950s and 1960s and the sense of deficiency engendered in many islanders by the actions of the patrol officers. We also see that resistance to such devaluing took place when some individuals were so successful at emulating Europeans that they became the Europeans’ political and economic competitors.

In chapter 2, a conflict erupts over shell money when a European entrepreneur wishes to take large amounts of it to Europe for resale. In this episode, issues of identity and worth are writ in the use of shell money: whence its value? From Europeans who wish to purchase it (that is, convert it into cash) and then transport it thousands of miles away, or from local people who use it on both an everyday and ritual basis? Chapter 3 is a discussion of local people’s caricatures of their own ancestors during a skit depicting the arrival of the first European missionary—the Reverend George Brown—over a century ago. In portraying their ancestors as babbling savages, the actors express, among other things, an awareness of the kinds of changes that have taken place over the last hundred years as well as a slap at the perceived naive and degrading European image of Melanesians as being somehow “precultural.” (In 1991 I witnessed a very similar dramatic rendition commemorating the Reverend Brown’s 1876 arrival on New Ireland, and I am struck by the ingenuity and subtlety of Errington and Gewertz’s analysis.)

Chapter 4 addresses a phenomenon occurring in many parts of Papua New Guinea: the emergence of evangelical and sometimes fundamentalist forms of Christianity within the context of older, more established forms. In

the Duke of Yorks version, a syllogism is set up such that the old form is to the new form as colonialism is to nationalism. Within the context of such an understanding, questions of identity and worth become especially poignant. Chapter 5 discusses the ways in which Duke of York Islanders deal with a new political and economic elite. A generation ago, such elites were largely exogenous; in the 1990s, new political and economic inequalities exist within villages and even descent groups. The concluding chapter looks to the future and suggests that the interest in and the room to maneuver around questions of identity and worth will not be going away anytime soon.

This book has an extremely wide range of uses. Easy to read, it could be used in undergraduate classes. But it is theoretically sophisticated and serves as a reminder to graduate students and professionals that peoples' continuous negotiation of self-worth does not hold still for us to pick up and turn over in our hands at our leisure: just as there never was an Eden or a rigid social order, neither is there a contemporary single blueprint for action as people encounter new political, economic, and religious forms.

One need not be a Melanesianist to appreciate this book. The phenomenon that Errington and Gewertz elucidate is not limited to the Duke of Yorks. For anyone interested in instances in which nationalism has replaced (or is assumed to have replaced) colonialism, capitalism has replaced (or is assumed to have replaced) traditional forms of exchange, and individualism has replaced (or is assumed to have replaced) the collectivity, this book will make excellent reading. One may occasionally be troubled by the authors' global assertions about people's motivations—for example, "Though they did celebrate, greet, and contribute [in a skit about the arrival of the first European missionary], it was in such a way that their compliance became a critique of the circumstances enforcing that compliance" (p. 85). But these are experienced ethnographers, and there is no reason to imagine that they have not, to use their phrase, "gotten things relatively right."

Arne Aleksej Perminow, *The Long Way Home: Dilemmas of Everyday Life in a Tongan Village*. Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture and Scandinavian University Press, 1993. Pp. 166, maps, appendixes, indexes, bibliography.

*Reviewed by C. J. Stevens, University of California, Berkeley*

While I was staying in a village on Tongatapu, the church youth group (*potungaue talavou*) was presented with the opportunity of traveling to the United States and, by performing traditional dances for Tongan congrega-



tions, collecting donations to finance the construction of a new church hall. The U.S. Immigration Service in Suva, knowing that many of these youth could reckon kin somewhere in Hawai'i or the U.S. mainland, had little intention of allowing twenty-nine young Tongan men and women an extended visit in 'Amelika. In point of fact, guessing the number of young people who would actually show up at the Los Angeles airport for the group's return flight to Tonga had become a bit of a joke in the village even as parents scrambled to collect enough money for their child's airfare to the States. The active membership of the youth group increased dramatically for a few weeks as they practiced the *ma'ulu'ulu*, *soke*, and other traditional dances, but all hopes were dashed when the U.S. State Department returned visas for only two female schoolteachers and their chaperons.

This episode captured the depths of Tongan youths' motivation not only to migrate out of their self-confessed circumscribed worlds or to find employment in Nuku'alofa, but to succeed in some remunerative endeavor and take their place in the social order (Perminow's term) either directly or from a substantial distance. Perminow's book sets out to discover the factors that influence Tongan youths' "process of deciding by which individuals become committed to different sorts of careers in the local community, on other islands in the periphery, in the capital or overseas" (p. 4). He also attempts to demonstrate that it is certain characteristics of the traditional Tongan social order, not population pressure on scarce resources or the allure of the metropolitan centers, that is responsible for the out-migration of youth from the island of Kotu in Ha'apai.

By saying something about the situation of the youth, who seldom have heritable rights to land (reserved by the constitution, until recently, for widows or eldest sons) and are constrained by their relative powerlessness in the social hierarchy, Perminow hopes to make statements about the process of social reproduction and change. Looking specifically for a small island "conforming to traditional anthropological ideals of creating 'laboratory conditions' in which to conduct research" (p. 6), Perminow uses the setting of an *'apitanga* (a church camp or an evangelical revival) to demonstrate the "process of deciding" and the factors which young people must take into consideration in deciding their life's course. As part of this revival, three young men are accepted into an evangelist training program. In the end one young man becomes an evangelist; a second one, who wished to marry one of his distant cousins, remained in the evangelist training program but was uncertain about his commitment; and the third *tamasi'i*, following the wishes of his father, went to work on his father's *kava* crop on Tofua Island.

The main concern of the *'apitanga* was not on recruitment per se but on lecturing children and adolescents on the dangers of alcohol. This theme,

says Perminow, highlights the contradictions between the two worlds presented to the Tongan youth as choices for their life's path: the "cognitive world" (p. 28) manifest in the Tongan social order, and the alternative "cognitive world" of life in Babylon (i.e., the capital, Nuku'alofa), where alcohol, sex, and materialism rob the youth of their Tonganness. Perminow cites Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1979) to "throw additional light on the explication of values in the 'apitanga'" (p. 40) and he notes the loss of "doxy" in Tongan culture, the creation of "orthodoxy" through the reconstruction of traditional values in the lessons of the 'apitanga' (epitomized by *kavatonga*), and the countering "heterodoxy" of the alternative values presented by modernization, epitomized in alcohol (*kavapalangi*).

Perminow presents a list of traits associated with *kavatonga* on the one hand and *kavapalangi* on the other (p. 60), but curiously he never mentions the most obvious distinction between them. He discusses the clear association of *kavatonga* with Tonganness, but doesn't mention the clear and obvious association of *kavapalangi* with *palangi* (European) and, therefore, its distinctive, metaphorical manifestation of un-Tonganness.

Perminow also asserts, in contradiction to both Lemert (1967) and Urbanowicz (1975), that there is but one type of *kava* ceremony in Tonga and that, largely because of that, the activities of the youth in *any faikava* (*kava*-drinking event) reflect traditionally held values of both cross-sex relations (as embodied in the brother-sister relationship) and cross-age relations (as typified in an overly structured rendition of the father-son relationship). His illustrations of how these relational rules impinge on youthful behavior, in and out of the contexts of *faikava*, are nicely done. However, although most *faikava* are ceremonialized to some extent, these rules of authority and power have substantially more significance at a *taumafa kava* (royal *kava* ceremony) than they do at a *kalapu faikava* (a fundraising event) and these differences in ceremonial significance, despite Perminow's assertion, probably do warrant typological distinction of *kava*-drinking events.

Perminow's study joins those that are concerned with understanding the decision-making processes of Tongan youth, largely males, who have been significantly marginalized from the means of production by limited employment opportunities. James (1994), for example, suggests that the appropriation by Tongan males of *fakaleiti* (effeminate male) status is secondary to a "male identity crisis" where traditional, largely economic, roles are rendered unavailable to Tongan youth in the process of modernization. Such studies are important in understanding the processes of cultural change and reconstruction and Perminow's focus on the traditional factors that influence this change, and the decision-making processes of youth caught in changing times, is much needed.

However, I found many of Perminow's conclusions puzzling or insufficiently supported by data (genealogies particularly), which, in my experience, are usually available in Tongan villages. For example, in arguing that virilocal postmarital residence and the prohibition of marrying any classificatory kin limit the number of non-kin-related individuals available for marriage, Perminow states, "indications are that some of the sixteen couples where both spouses originated in Kotu were uncomfortably closely related" (p. 107). This supports his contention that the case of the young man who wished to marry his classificatory sister was not an exceptional case because the limited number of available mates over time makes extending marriage prohibitions to all classificatory kin untenable (p. 108). But Perminow gives no genealogical documentation of his belief that distant-cousin marriage was not as rare as Aoyagi (1966) and others have contended. Nor does he present genealogical documentation of the relations between Kotu and other islands in Ha'apai to which Kotu's youth had migrated before economic changes made Nuku'alofa their destination.

Although not unusual in Tongan studies, Perminow applies a structuralist perspective to Tongan social organization that assumes continuity between commoner and noble forms of social hierarchy. This perspective, in my mind, obscures the complex and discursive nature of decision making that characterizes Tongan households and families. Although Perminow does discuss the importance of family structure and the power of the father's sister (*mehekitanga*), and how these structural relations impinge on decision making, his inattention to historical evidence serves to detract from his argument and from the ethnographic descriptions, presented as narratives, which are the most enjoyable and informative aspects of his text.

Dirk Smidt, Pieter ter Keurs, and Albert Trouwborst, eds., *Pacific Material Culture: Essays in Honour of Dr. Simon Kooijman on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday*. Leiden: Stichting Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, 1995. Pp. 336, maps, figures, photographs, biography, bibliography.

*Reviewed by Sandra Bamford, University of Lethbridge*

As the title suggests, the sixteen papers that make up this volume are organized around the theme of Pacific material culture. The collection represents a welcome addition to Pacific ethnography on two fronts: first, it makes available to an English-speaking audience some of the work being done by colleagues in the Netherlands; second, it brings some much-needed attention to a topic that has tended to receive short shrift in the ethnographic literature on the Pacific.



The papers in this volume are written in honor of Dr. Simon Kooijman, who served as curator of the Oceania collection at the Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde) in Leiden from 1946 to 1980. Trained as a social geographer at the University of Utrecht, Kooijman emerges from the various biographic sketches presented here as something of a modern-day "Renaissance man." In addition to his museum work, he published extensively on Polynesian barkcloth and "primitive" art, and carried out first-hand field research in Western Polynesia (Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji) and among the Marind-anim of South New Guinea. (A ten-page bibliography of Kooijman's writings is included in the volume, attesting to his continuing activity as a research scholar.) Also deeply committed to the visual documentation of material culture and social life, he is known for his film-making efforts and extensive photographic collections.

The book is divided into four parts, each of approximately equal length. The first section, comprising four chapters (by van Wengen, Trouwborst, Smidt, and Rosema), sets out the historical background to Kooijman's work. Here we learn all we ever wanted to know (and frequently a lot more) about Kooijman's activities at the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden. In addition to providing the reader with a detailed life history of the man (see particularly the paper by van Wengen), we are introduced to the general principles that guided his organization of temporary and permanent museum exhibits (Smidt), including his use of slides and photography to augment the artifactual displays (Rosema). Trouwborst's paper, which focuses on his fieldwork and subsequent publications on Moce Island (Fiji), rounds out the picture of the man and his accomplishments. The essays in this section will have some appeal to those who are engaged in museum work but are of less interest to the general reader of anthropology or Pacific studies.

The five chapters in part 2 are devoted to the study of barkcloth in Oceania—a central theme of Kooijman's own scholarship. Yet, if Kooijman's publications on tapa were primarily descriptive in nature, focused on the techniques of tapa manufacture and design (a point that is made in part 1 of the book), the papers in this section take a decidedly more interpretive approach to the subject and focus instead on its social and symbolic meaningfulness. Kaeppler's paper explores how indigenous ideas of power and prestige are reflected in the design features of Tongan barkcloth. Here we see how barkcloth designs may "record a visual history of important events, places and people" (p. 121), thereby linking the past and the present in a single aesthetic image. The contributions by Teilhet-Fisk and Hooper, which are focused on Tonga and Kabara (Fiji) respectively, relate tapa production and use to indigenous constructions of gender and to cosmological understandings of life and death. Teilhet-Fisk's paper is a particularly compelling analysis and deserves special mention in terms of the sensitivity that



she brings to bear on the relationship between cultural symbolism and social change. Hoogerbrugge's essay shifts the focus of attention from Polynesia to Indonesia. In his paper, he documents how an efflorescence in barkcloth painting in the Lake Sentani area between 1993 and 1994 was related to the growth of the tourist industry and to other forces of globalization, including the activities of two museums in the area. Ter Keurs's discussion of the ornamented barkcloth jackets of Enggano Island (Indonesia) highlights the difficulty in interpreting design motifs and the need for further research in this area.

Part 3 consists of four chapters, each a contained case study of some aspect of Pacific material culture: of woodcarving, of the relationship between ethnicity and art style, of the significance of arrow designs, and of regional variation in the manufacture and ornamentation of war shields. In the first of these, van der Grijp examines how a new "aesthetics of inequality" (p. 214) is developing between Tongan men and women as woodcarvings—a traditional item of male manufacture—begin to enter the commodity market through the burgeoning tourist trade. The papers by Newton and Craig that follow are concerned with what a more formal analysis of decorative designs can tell us about the history and prehistory of non-Western peoples. Newton looks at how the style of art and architecture in the Sepik (Papua New Guinea) can supplement what is known of the history of migration in the region. He concludes that anomalies in art styles reflect a complex history of population movement and ethnic interrelationships. Craig's paper also explores how variations in arrow designs can help to elucidate the history of the Bismarck Archipelago (Papua New Guinea). Boeren's discussion of Asmat war shields draws upon the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss as a source of theoretical inspiration. He explores how transformations in design principles are tied to other cultural variations, including head-hunting practices and the relationships that exist between human beings and the non-human world.

The final section includes three papers devoted to the analysis of religion and ritual. These contributions are rather far removed from the main theme of the book (material culture) and are only marginally tied to the rest of this volume. Van der Leeden's only justification for analyzing an Australian Aboriginal myth, for example, lies in his claim that Kooijman was also interested in the topic (p. 293). However, what these papers do hint at, albeit indirectly, is the range of issues to which an analysis of material culture could possibly lead. Claessen's contribution explores the role of the god Oro in the history of Tahitian politics during the eighteenth century. He shows how possession of a feather girdle associated with this god entitled its bearer to preside over human sacrifice and was thus implicated in local political

relations. Zegwaard's essay picks up on Kooijman's later-day interest in Mimika (Indonesian) art and explores the significance of Mimika penis sheaths. Although the bulk of this paper is devoted to an analysis of Mimika rites of male initiation, some attention is also given to the relationship between penis covers and indigenous cosmology.

Two subthemes run through this book and give it the modicum of integration that it possesses. One has to do with the link between material forms and social identity. If the reader is paying close attention, she or he will begin to get a sense of how various aspects of material culture are tied to the elicitation of culturally meaningful social identities, including those based on gender (Teilhet-Fisk, Hooper, van der Grijp, Zegwaard), kinship (Kaeppler), ethnicity (Newton, Craig, Boeren), and political relations (Kaeppler, Claessen). Again, I refer the reader to the paper by Teilhet-Fisk, which is, perhaps, the most sophisticated analysis in this volume. Secondly, several essays help to document the relationship between modernization (or globalization) and its objectified representation (see particularly the articles by Smidt, Kaeppler, Teilhet-Fisk, Hoogerbrugge, and van der Grijp). Unfortunately, these themes are never explicitly emphasized by the editors and it is left to the reader to discover points of connection between the papers.

Overall, the volume makes a number of contributions. As I noted earlier, material culture has been sorely neglected by Pacific scholars, and for this reason alone the book deserves kudos for venturing into something of an anthropological no-man's land. Further, the range of ethnographic coverage represented in this collection is impressive. Spanning Polynesia, Australia, Indonesia, and Melanesia, the book pulls together material from several major subregions and helps to remind the reader why it makes a certain amount of sense to speak of the Pacific as being a quasi-integrated cultural area.

Notwithstanding these offerings, one wishes that the editors had made a greater attempt to motivate the volume as a whole and to bring it within the scope of current theoretical debates in the discipline, including, for example, reflexive museology. Simon Kooijman is offered up as the sole glue that binds the collection together, yet by several of the authors' own admission (see, for example, Dark, van Wengen, Trouwborst, and ter Keurs) Kooijman was not prone to making theoretical statements but adopted instead a "documentary" style to cultural ethnography (p. 49, Trouwborst). Although several papers manage to move beyond the level of pure description, the volume as a whole never transcends Kooijman's stance, and consequently it fails to make a solid contribution to general anthropological theory. For this reason, the primary audience of this book will be confined to those with a specialized interest in material culture.

Donald D. Johnson, with Gary Dean Best, *The United States in the Pacific: Private Interests and Public Policies, 1784–1899*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995. Pp. 225, bibliography, index. US\$59.95.

*Reviewed by Charles J. Weeks Jr., Southern College of Technology, Marietta, Georgia*

During a long and distinguished career teaching history at the University of Hawai'i, the late Donald D. Johnson (1917–1993) was indeed a pioneer in the study of the United States' activities in the Pacific. This volume represents the synthesis of his thoughts regarding American expansion into the Pacific Ocean area during the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, Professor Johnson passed away before he could finish his work on this book, having been delayed by the necessity of completing two other books: *Hawaii's Own: A History of the Hawaii Government Employees Association* (1986) and *The City and County of Honolulu: A Government Chronicle* (1991). In honor of his mentor, diplomatic historian Gary Dean Best has prepared Johnson's study for final publication.

In his preface, Professor Johnson explains that he intends to determine "what American interests [in the Pacific] really were, whose interests they were, and how government policies supposedly designed for their well-being were suited to that end" (p. xii). To answer these questions he begins his study in 1784, when the *Empress of China* became the first American ship to arrive in China, and ends in 1899, when the controversy surrounding American acquisition of the Philippines reached a climax. In the interim he traces the experiences of the numerous interest groups—whalers, sealers, explorers, missionaries, merchants, government officials, politicians, and naval officers—that were active in Pacific affairs during that era. Since the Pacific was the main area of American overseas expansion during the latter half of the nineteenth century, a period that many historians consider an "age of imperialism," Johnson scrutinizes the objectives of these interest groups as they ventured into the Pacific. Rejecting economic determinism, he concludes that the motives behind U.S. policy in Oceania were "varied, complex, and often contradictory." They included "personal ambition, humanitarianism, missionary zeal, bureaucratic interest, and patriotic concern" (p. xii). In reality, American businessmen were usually less assertive in calling for government intervention than were self-serving politicians and publicists.

Johnson effectively argues that the American public's lack of interest in or knowledge of the Pacific area enabled small groups and individuals, usu-



ally in Washington, to exert influence on government policy far out of proportion to their numbers. In many instances, domestic promoters and politicians were able to encourage American expansion despite the opposition or disinterest of those groups actually involved in the Pacific. For instance, in the 1830s one-man lobbyist Jeremiah Reynolds was able to generate enthusiasm within the Andrew Jackson administration for a naval exploring expedition to Oceania to promote the whaling industry. By and large, however, the whalers themselves exhibited a marked lack of interest for such an undertaking and were quite content to go about their business without government "help." Similarly, Theodore Roosevelt's belief that Hawai'i was vital to national security, Secretary of State John Hay's view that Pago Pago harbor was "indispensable," and Captain Alfred T. Mahan's arguments in favor of maintaining naval bases in the Philippines were all after the fact contrivances made after the Spanish-American War as rationalizations. They did not accurately reflect contemporary geopolitical reality before 1898. Johnson believes that the "pseudo-strategic" arguments of these three expansionists helped to create myths that functioned to prepare Americans to accept a role as empire builders in the Pacific. As a result, the United States made crucial historical choices and commitments far out of proportion to its real interests in the Pacific at the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, in the absence of public scrutiny, interest groups exerted a great influence on public policy on the basis of assumptions that were, at best, dubious.

Although Johnson's thesis is not revolutionary, he has done an excellent job of placing American diplomacy in the Pacific in a clear, coherent perspective. His book is more historical interpretation than detailed history and will therefore be of most interest to those with a background in Pacific studies and American history. It provides a perceptive and well-reasoned analysis of the period but contains few interesting anecdotes. Unlike most diplomatic historians, however, Johnson also scrutinizes events from the perspective of the islands, instead of concentrating almost exclusively on domestic American politics. His point that the appeals of promoters for expansion were "fanciful" and "involved fundamental ignorance or misunderstanding of the societies with which they proposed to deal" is especially well made (p. xvii). This book's greatest contribution is in preserving the synthesis of forty years of work and study by one of the most respected experts in the field. Its only shortcoming, perhaps unavoidable given the circumstance under which it was completed, is that some of the sources are a bit dated and most of the secondary works cited have pre-1980 publication dates.



Andrew Armitage, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995. Pp. 286, bibliography, index. US\$24.95 paper.

*Reviewed by Ann Sullivan, University of Waikato*

*Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation* is a timely piece of work. Armitage is correct when he says that in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand "the aboriginal minority is challenging the fundamental assimilationist objectives of social policy—objectives which have been the cornerstone of government and popular thinking for 150 years" (p. 8). The aim of this book is to provide a comparative understanding of aboriginal child welfare policies to "assist in the search for new ways to conduct social policy" (p. 8). Understanding government objectives that have controlled aboriginal children is important because policies of the past have shaped, regulated, and attempted to assimilate future generations. Therefore, social policies used to carry out these objectives are partly responsible for the poor socioeconomic position of the indigenous peoples.

As director of the School of Social Work at the University of Victoria, Armitage is well qualified to write on aboriginal child welfare policies. A social worker in British Columbia in the 1960s, he worked with First Nations children who had been forcibly removed from their homes and tribal communities because the state deemed alternate parenting to be in their interests. In 1986 Armitage was appointed superintendent of family and child service in British Columbia. He saw firsthand the results of child welfare and adoption policies that undermined the collective identity of aboriginal peoples and promoted systematic assimilation. But by the late 1980s and into the 1990s Armitage claims that attitudes have been changing, wherein policies today are attempting to accommodate cultural values and the social organization of the indigenous minorities.

Aboriginal social policy objectives date back to the 1837 British House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines. These objectives sought "to impose European civilization and Christianity upon other cultures" (p. 194) and "children offered the best means of ensuring that aboriginal peoples would be prepared for the responsibilities of Christianity, civilization, and British citizenship" (p. 204). Children were considered the most effective and efficient means to dominate, subjugate, and assimilate the "inferior" indigenous peoples.

Armitage sets the scene for contextualizing aboriginal child welfare policies with a good overview of the political environments that have determined policies from colonization until the present. He examines the Austra-

lian eras of protection, assimilation, and self-management; the Canadian periods of tribal sovereignty, assimilation, integration, and limited self-government; and the periods of assimilation, integration, and limited self-determination in New Zealand. He clearly describes an assimilative determination that denied the language, culture, traditions, and collective social organization of the indigenous peoples. Having provided the reader with a comprehensive background to the political and public policy arenas of aboriginal policy, he then goes on to discuss the assimilative nature of child welfare policies in each country.

Chapters 3 and 5 focus on child welfare policies in Canada and Australia. In these two countries until the 1960s, "officials had the power to take aboriginal children away from their parents and confine them for most of their childhood to either dormitories or residential schools. The model of practice followed was, essentially, industrial (i.e., the workhouse). Aboriginal children were to be educated so that they would forget their origins and become European" (p. 236). "Children were removed from their parents without regard to differences of history, culture, or ethnicity because the assumption was that these factors were much less important than were physical health, diet, housing, absence of alcoholism" (p. 120). Such assimilative policies were of course failures, not least because an "institutionalized childhood is the least desirable basis for adulthood" (p. 237).

Unlike Aboriginal and First Nations peoples, the Maori were extended the rights and privileges of British subjects under Article Three of the Treaty of Waitangi from the time New Zealand was colonized in 1840. Therefore, child welfare measures did not seek to institutionalize the children. Government policies instead sought to assimilate them through a monocultural education system that used English as the compulsory medium of instruction and by denying Maori culture, its collective identity, and extended family support structures (chapter 7).

Using Michael Banton's race relations model to identify patterns of domination, paternalism, and integration since colonization, within his general framework of assimilation (pp. 185–186), Armitage usefully assesses patterns of difference and similarity among the three countries. Part of the process of assimilation is to phase out separate strategies and policies as well as inequalities between indigenous and nonindigenous people. This took place in the 1960s era of "integration," when social policies were designed to mainstream aboriginal peoples into the wider society (p. 172).

In 1962 Australian Aboriginal people were finally given the right to participate in the country's "democratic" elections; in 1967 they were incorporated in the census. Specialized institutions of aboriginal government in all three countries were replaced by integrated institutions (p. 199), and there

was now no assumption that all aboriginal children should be removed from their parents. Accordingly, the proportion of aboriginal children being cared for by authorities fell sharply, although the numbers were still much higher than the proportion of nonaboriginal children (p. 208). The child welfare systems typically overlooked the fact that an increasing proportion of the children in the mainstream systems were aboriginal (p. 210).

This book is a start to understanding how policies of the past have shaped the future and why those policies have failed. In Australia, Canada, and New Zealand the indigenous minority peoples fare badly on most if not all socio-economic indicators. These peoples are disproportionately dependent upon the state for welfare support compared with any other sector or class of people in their own country. Much of this dependency has arisen because of the loss of tribal lands. Land alienation included forced removal, confiscations, broken treaty promises, wars, systematic individualization of land titles, and long-term land leasing.

Dependency has also been compounded by social policies towards aboriginals. If social policies are intended to reduce welfare dependency and the number of aboriginal people in state institutions such as hospitals, mental institutions, prisons and welfare homes, then that dependency mode into which so many have been forced has to be reversed. Governments must accommodate the needs of their indigenous peoples, and Armitage believes this is now possible. "I find myself standing with those who have faith in the steps which are now being taken towards accommodating, through dialogue and compromise, the self-determination of aboriginal peoples" (p. 242).

Two small points. The English language has been a powerful assimilative tool. It is irritating to find some Maori words incorrectly spelled in the book. In the Canadian section, I would like to have seen more discussion of the assimilative issues that surrounded the denial of "Indian status" to some First Nations women.

Nevertheless, this book provides a substantive contribution to the fields of indigenous social and public policy. If policy makers are serious in their efforts to support aboriginal self-determination, and to lessen the state dependency of their indigenous peoples, then Armitage's book should be essential reading.

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## BOOKS NOTED

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### RECENT PACIFIC ISLANDS PUBLICATIONS: SELECTED ACQUISITIONS, OCTOBER 1995–FEBRUARY 1996

THIS LIST of significant new publications relating to the Pacific Islands was selected from new acquisitions lists received from Brigham Young University–Hawai‘i, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Bernice P. Bishop Museum, University of Auckland, East-West Center, University of the South Pacific, National Library of Australia, and the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau’s Centre for Pacific Development Training. Other libraries are invited to send contributions to the Books Noted Editor for future issues. Listings reflect the extent of information provided by each institution.

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